



# THE RED-HOUSE CHILDREN'S YEAR

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS





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THE RED HOUSE CHILDREN'S YEAR



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"THE STEAMER LOOKED SO GRAND AS SHE STARTED OUT IN  
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LITTLE RED HOUSE SERIES

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THE RED HOUSE  
CHILDREN'S YEAR

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

ILLUSTRATED BY LOUISE WYMAN



BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.



PZ 7  
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Published, April, 1915

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THE RED HOUSE CHILDREN'S YEAR

Norwood Press  
BERWICK & SMITH CO.  
Norwood, Mass.  
U. S. A.

\$1.00

APR -5 1915

©CL A397405



new Apr. 21 '15.

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# THE RED HOUSE CHILDREN'S YEAR

## CHAPTER I

### A LITTLE RUNAWAY

THERE was much hurrying to and fro. It seemed as if the children had grown larger. Five of them to oversee, to make sure that they were in order. And they were eager to find their mates and talk over vacation. Linn had the tickets for car-fares, Amaryllis took the oversight of the girls, and they started off gayly for school.

Then there were the three smaller ones. Laurel kept winking her eyes very hard. Rhoda was hurrying, though Mrs. Mann said there was plenty of time. She wanted to take her lunch, and as it was wash-day her mother was willing. She put two of everything in the box so that Laurel should not be defrauded. Tip wanted to carry his own.

"Now, be good to sister," the mother said to Rhoda, who turned her head and wrinkled up her nose.



"Come on, Lal! I can't wait all day," was the response of that important child, as she marched along.

"Tip, have you a handkerchief! And your pencil-case?"

"Oh, I laid them down in the swing," and he ran down the garden path.

"Now be a good boy," and his mother kissed him.

"I'm going to stop for Jimmy Myers," and off he ran.

The twins had turned the first corner. Mrs. Mann went in and cleared the breakfast-table. Cap, the hired girl, was singing cheerily. Mrs. Mann had made arrangements with Miss Raynor, the teacher, so that she did not need to go with them. Goldie had curled their hair, and tied one twin's curls with pink ribbon, the other's with blue. Rhoda's latest fad was to have her hair combed out in a brush just below the ribbon. When she was a big girl she was not going to wear baby curls.

"You won't like it," she said to Lal, just before breakfast, "and if you don't study hard you'll get punished. You hold out your hand and Miss Raynor slaps it with a ruler and it hurts like everything."



When they turned the corner, Rhoda hurried on. Laurel stopped short. There was another way. Her lip quivered and she began to cry. Oh, she could not go to school! Then obeying a sudden impulse, she ran as fast as her little legs could carry her, this way—that way—until she was tired and out of breath. She sat down on the soft grass in the shade of a tree and waited a while.

“I’ve just runned away. An’ I don’t know where the school is. An’ I’m afraid of Miss Raynor. I wish I could find the little old house where we used to live. And the lady makes *such* nice cake. O dear!”

She did not know which way to go. The September sun was growing hotter, and she was very thirsty. If she could only go to Papa’s factory! She would climb up in his lap and kiss him and beg him not to send her to school. But she couldn’t walk so far as to the city.

She was very tired and her legs ached. But she rose and trudged along. There was a shady street with some nice houses. And here was one with a great porch, and an old gentleman sat there in a big easy-chair.

“If I could only find that nice farmer man! And the lady who held me just like Mother and who was so sweet.”



She wiped away her tears with her clean white apron and it made a smudge. The old gentleman had a little table beside him and a large gray cat nestled in his lap. There was a pitcher and a tumbler—maybe he would give her a drink. She went up two steps.

“Hello, little girl! What do you want?” he asked.

“I’m so firsty I’m ’most dried up. Could I have a drink? I think I’m losted!”

“Well, well! Where did you come from? And what is your name?”

“Name, Laurel Firth. An’ I live on Linden Avenue. There’s a lot of children. An’ I’m the littlest.”

“I’m sorry you are lost, but I’m glad to see such a nice little girl. They don’t often visit me.” Then he rang the bell and a lady answered it.

“Will you bring this little girl a drink? She says she’s lost.”

“Oh, you poor thing! How did you come to get lost?”

“I ’spect I went crooked;” hesitatingly.

The lady smiled. “Will you have a glass of milk and a piece of cake?”



"Oh, that will be drefful nice. Thank you so very much."

There was something winsome in the child's endeavor to be polite.

"Where were you going all alone?"

Laurel flushed beyond the heat. "I wasn't going anywhere—I mean——" She hated to admit she was going to school.

"Where do you live?"

"Linden Avenue. My papa lived there long ago, and Christmas we all lived there. He's the best papa——"

The lady passed through the hall and returned with another glass of milk.

"What is your father's name?" she asked, sitting down beside the child.

"Name, Mr. Mann."

"I thought you said your name was Firth," said the old gentleman.

A shade of perplexity crossed her face.

"I'm too little and can't know all about it. But he asked us all to come over, and we've had such a nice time. He gives us everything. The other papa died a long while ago. I don't 'member him."

"Linden Avenue," repeated the lady thoughtfully. "Why, there was a queer story some time



last winter about a man marrying a widow with ever so many children—the one who took the Gedney place. How many are there?”

“Eight,” answered Laurel promptly. “And Rhoda’s a twin. So am I.”

The old gentleman laughed with a sense of amusement. “What does your mother do with so many children?”

“Sends ’em to school. All but Rhoda and Tip go in the trolley.”

“Oh, I can recall the circumstance now,” said the lady. “They came from that benighted place, Denby. And people thought——”

“He’s splendid. And he has a big dimple in his cheek. Prim wants it but she can’t get it out.”

“And who is Prim?”

“Well, she’s one of Mother’s children. Her name is Primrose. Then there’s Rilla and Goldie and Linn, an’ he’s a big boy, an’ Chan an’ Tip an’ Rhoda an’ me. I’m Laurel.”

“And Mr. Mann married your mother?”

“Yes. It was just buful. She had a white frock an’ flowers in her hair. An’ the next morning it was Christmas. An’ we’ve stayed ever since. Santa Claus brought us such lots of things. An’ we’ve got such a big, splendid swing. We go all over the world in it.”



Mrs. Gray laughed. "Yes, Father, it must be those people Mrs. Greer talks about. And the little boy with the splendid voice?"

"That's Chan," said Laurel.

"And how did you come to get lost?"

"Well—Rhoda went so fast and I turned the wrong way. And I fink I must go home, though I don't know how," and her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, you poor, sweet child! Don't cry, I will send some one with you. Won't you have another piece of cake?"

Laurel shook her head. Then she bethought herself. "I thank you very much for the cake and the milk and the getting cool again, and—all the nice things," and she rose.

Mrs. Gray wanted to hug her to her heart, she was so quaint and sweet.

"I'll send some one with you so you will not get lost again. Letty," she called, and a girl of fourteen answered the summons.

"Letty, I want you to take this little girl over to Linden Avenue. And you must come again and bring some of your sisters. This is my father, Captain Overton. We have no little folks, but I like them very much. And I'd like to see the whole eight."

"Maybe Dan will bring us some time. We have



Bonnie and another horse. I'm very much obliged to you."

Mrs. Gray kissed her and Grandfather shook hands warmly. Letty tied the child's sun-hat and took her by the hand. Laurel had rambled about a good deal, but now they walked straight over to Linden Avenue, though some of it was only a country road. Grafton had been laid out with a good deal of care and young trees planted by a wise association.

They turned into the Avenue and Laurel began to recognize familiar points.

"Oh, I know now!" and dropping Letty's hand she ran on swiftly, her head full of the delightful adventure. But at the house she paused—what would she say to her mother. And would she have to go to school the next day?

The gayety faded out of her face and a sense of something not quite right stole over her. She went to the back porch and sat down on the step, drawing a long, sighing breath.

Cap came with an armful of clothes just dry enough to fold.

"Why, Lal! Did they send you home from school?"

"I didn't go. I was losted."

"You didn't go?" in surprise.



"Rhoda went so fast. And I didn't know the way."

Mrs. Mann heard the voice and came through the kitchen.

"Laurel, what is the matter? Why didn't you go to school?"

She began to cry a little. "She didn't want me. She went on so fast. There was a corner and I didn't know——"

"Come in and tell me all about it."

They went through to the new reception-room that made the hallway much prettier. The mother took off Laurel's hat and brushed back her curls.

"I was losted. An' I went on and on. It was so warm I sat down on the grass. And then I went on to where a nice old man lived. He had white hair and a little table with a bell on it. I was so dry I asked him for a drink. And a lady came and gave me some milk and a nice piece of cake. So I got rested an' she sent Letty home with me."

"Why didn't you take hold of Rhoda's hand?"

"She—she didn't want me to."

Laurel hung her head. Her mother shook her by the shoulder.

"You have been a very naughty girl. I have a good mind to spank you hard."



She looked pitiful standing there. She was not really crying but the big tears rolled down her soft cheeks. Perhaps Bessy thought she had better wait and question Rhoda, as both might be to blame. She had not wanted Laurel to go to school. Sometimes Tip protested against it as well.

"Muver, if you spanked me real hard, then could I stay home? Oh, I don't want to go to school!" and she threw herself in her mother's lap.

Bessy was very soft-hearted. And the sweet little face was so woe-begone.

"Oh, Laurel, I am afraid, after all, that you—you'll always be a baby," and in spite of discipline she kissed amid tears.

"It was very bad," sobbed the child, coming back to her truthful habit. "I did run 'way down the street an' then I couldn't see her. They're cross at school and the girls will laugh at me 'cause—'cause——"

"There, don't cry. Come and have your face washed and eat a little luncheon after this long walk. Then you must go to bed, just as Katy used to do."

Laurel sobbed a little but half smiled up into her mother's face. But she did not want much to eat.

"Tell me about the old gentleman," said her mother.



"Oh, he was all white and wrinkly and his hair was long. And his voice was crinkly-like, and he rang his little bell and asked me what my name was, and where I lived. He had a big pussy on his lap, but it didn't jump down, so I knew it wasn't afraid. And Letty was real nice, but I didn't let her come when I knew my way along the street. And the lady said we must all come, 'cause they hadn't any little folks. Oh, I'm so tired."

The walk through the heat and the variety of emotions had exhausted her. Bessy studied her with wonder as well as mother love. She was such a baby still, yet she was glad to have her different from Rhoda.

Cap put away the few dishes and prepared for ironing what she called the common things. Mrs. Mann took her sewing out on the porch, thinking the matter over.

Mr. Mann would not have her go to school after this protest, she well knew. And if Rhoda should be unkind to her!

Mrs. Boyce was coming up the path alone. Had Amy been naughty, too?

"It's a lovely day in the shade, isn't it? I've brought some work and I want a quiet little talk with you! Did Laurel come home? Amy said



she saw her. And that child has acted like a witch all the morning. So I said she shouldn't come over here."

"Laurel didn't go to school. I think Rhoda rather snubbed her. You'd suppose twins would be dear to each other, but they are not. I don't just know what to do. And Mr. Mann babies her so much."

"Well we all think they're wonderfully good children and seem to care so much for each other, I wish I had another girl. One child is so lonely. And Amy is so fond of companionship. And I'm going to ask a favor of you for the whole winter. It is that instead of sending Laurel to Miss Raynor you will let her come over and study with Amy. It won't be like a real school but I think they will learn as much. And if Laurel should not like it at Miss Raynor's——"

"Oh, Mrs. Boyce, it will be too much trouble."

"I want it a little for myself. Amy will be much more content. Mr. Boyce will not hear of her going to school until she is past seven. You see we have had one sad lesson. Our little Alice was a very smart child and we were both proud of her. She was six when Amy was born. She never cared much for dolls or children's play. It was all books with her, and wanting to know the



why of everything. She was a really studious child and much prettier than Amy. Her father was wrapped up in her, as the saying is. He was never very enthusiastic about little babies, though he was glad to have them. The boys were both good students. We gave Alice every advantage. She had begun with music, too, and was considered very promising. That summer Amy was not well and I do suppose I should have paid more attention to my poor darling, but she had been pretty generally well. They were to have a little play at the closing exercises and she had an important part. She would have made a fine actress; she entered so into the spirit of the play; seemed to understand just what was needed. Her father was delighted. That night my little Amy had another bad attack, and Alice was very much exhausted. We planned to go to the seaside as soon as Amy could be taken. Meanwhile the Orphans' Home in our town was to have an entertainment to raise funds, that the children might be taken to a farm which had been offered for a week's holiday, and they begged to have the play repeated. Alice was all eagerness, and her father did feel proud of the compliment. It was a grand success, and Mr. Howland, one of the trustees, presented her with a beautiful ring that delighted



her above measure. She was very tired the next day and looked like a ghost and was quite willing to stay in bed. Two other handsome gifts were sent in. We were packed up and ready to start for the seaside when in the middle of the night she was taken violently ill with delirium. The doctor pronounced it brain fever. Oh, I cannot tell you our anxiety. She was at her lessons, she was reading, she was in the play again until they had to resort to opiates. Her father never left her day or night. And when the fever was gone, all her strength went with it. And so we lost our charming little daughter, and it seemed everybody's loss as well. Mr. Boyce was absolutely stunned. She was little past seven when she died. Then we sold our house and came to Grafton. And that is why he never wants to hear of wonderful children and insists that Amy shall not go to school until she is past seven."

Mrs. Boyce paused and wiped away a flood of tears. Mrs. Mann did the same in sympathy.

"It must have been heart-breaking," she said with deep emotion.

"If we had not consented to her repeating the play! But she was such an eager, enthusiastic child. Amy is so different, so full of play, and



really cares little for study. My teaching is on the kindergarten order, varied by a good many changes. She loves to sew, she can make really pretty dolls' clothes, and now has a fancy for embroidery. And this summer has been splendid for her. Mr. Boyce thinks we owe your children a great deal. And then the two little girls might have been sisters. Amy needs some incentive, and she cannot bear harshness. Then she has a curious fearfulness about her. She is not a bit aggressive. I doubt if she would enjoy it at Miss Raynor's."

"It is lovely of you to propose it," returned Mrs. Mann, "and it would be a great advantage to Laurel. Her knowledge is of the most desultory kind and very much mixed up with Prim's nonsense. The children play upon Laurel's credulity. But Mr. Mann is so fond of keeping her a baby that I give in. I suppose there will be time enough for her to learn. I can't say I approve of Rhoda's forwardness and masterly ways," and the mother colored. "It is so difficult to make a large family do just as you would like."

"Yes, or even one. And I am a little selfish. I thought how lonely it would be for Amy this winter after the rather exuberant summer. They do so enjoy being together and they agree wonderfully.



Then they will entertain each other and give me a little more leisure. I often sew while Amy is studying or doing little sums. You see I am a great home body. I have to write to the boys every week and am very fond of sewing. I keep my evenings for Mr. Boyce, who is fond of music or having me read aloud. Now and then some friends drop in. Yes, I wish there were more children," and she gave a little sigh. "Oh, I shall be very glad to have Laurel this winter."

"I was quite puzzled, for I was afraid she would not get along very well at Miss Raynor's. It would be hard to be so far behind Rhoda, since she is a twin. But I thought they both ought to obey me. Only I was afraid Mr. Mann would interfere, he is so indulgent. I have hard work to convince him that she ought to go to school."

"You have a fine husband, and the children *are* admired by the neighborhood. It was funny at first," and Mrs. Boyce laughed. "Eight seemed to shock most of the neighbors. But we wouldn't want to spare one of them."

"Thank you," and Bessy Mann flushed.

"I shall take a light heart back with me. And I think I have punished Amy enough, though I told her she could not come over this afternoon. But I shall save the good news for to-morrow."



"I feel that I owe Mrs. Alden a good deal. She had many nice ways, and Denby manners have not much polish."

Mrs. Boyce rose to go and declared again that she was the obliged one. Mrs. Mann went through to the kitchen where Cap had the ironing-board spread out and a pile of the plainer things out of the way, as she expressed it. Monday night's dinner was never very ornate.

"No, you can't do anything to help, Dan fixed the vegetables; he's as handy as a girl. And the folks were clear beat about my going down to Cent'l Park," Cap went on. "Pop thought it must have cost a mint of money. Anything for pleasure seems so wasteful to him. An' he always quotes 'bout a willful waste making a woeful want, and said if I had money to waste I'd better help get some rheumatiz medicine for Mother. An' he puttin' by every little while an' only three children at home now. But he'll find there's a big difference between boys an' girls. But he was clear 'stonished when I told him it didn't cost me a cent," and Cap gave a merry laugh.

"We thought you earned your holiday looking after the children. I couldn't have enjoyed half as much if you had not been there."



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“It’s mighty nice for you to put it that way. Why, it will last me all winter. I’ll have to tell it all over every time I go home, I’m sorry for poor Phene, she don’t seem to get much fun.”



## CHAPTER II

### ARITHMETIC VERSUS NATURAL HISTORY

ALL the children were late, for there were so many things to talk over. Tip wasn't a bit enthusiastic about school, but Rhoda announced that she had gone ahead in two classes.

"What made you go on so fast and leave your little sister?" her mother asked in a rather severe tone.

"Why—didn't she wait for Tip? And when he came in alone I thought he'd sent her back. He was almost late. And I wanted to get a seat by Bella Martin, 'cause she loves to study things for herself."

"You were a very naughty girl and I shall tell Father. She didn't know how to go and was lost. Some kind people took her in and sent their maid home with her."

"Mother, I wish you didn't have to send her to school this winter. She'll have to sit with the little children, for she can't be by me. And I know she'll cry, and maybe be sent home, for it



would disturb the older scholars. And I don't want to lose any marks. It would be awfully mean if I did. Can't you teach her at home? If I've got to give up everything——" and Rhoda began to cry.

"I'm sorry you don't love your sister any better. What if she'd met with some accident—been run over perhaps——"

"Oh, she's so afraid to cross a street if she sees a horse, or a big dog! She's so different, Mother. And I'm with the big girls all the time. I don't think Laurel's real smart, and the girls would make fun of her. I couldn't be taking her part every minute."

"You are a very selfish little girl, Rhoda. And as you grow older, no one will like you."

"But they *do* like me," and Rhoda held her head up very straight.

"I shall think up some punishment for you. Perhaps I shall deprive you of something you want very much. And I don't know what Father will say to you."

"I must go and study my lessons. They are going to be real hard."

She did not detain the child, for she saw she was making no impression on her. She went



up to Laurel, who was sitting up in bed telling herself a wonderful story of adventure.

Mrs. Mann kissed her and lifted her down. Then she brushed her hair and put on the white frock she had worn yesterday.

"Is some one coming?" the child asked.

"Only Father. And you are his little girl, you know."

"Muver dear, I never will run away again, no, never; I'll stand right still and some one will surely find me," and she gave her mother a rapturous hug.

"You will not have to go to Miss Raynor. Mrs. Boyce came in and asked that you might study with Amy. So all winter you can run down there. But you must study in real earnest and catch up with Rhoda."

"I'm so glad! so glad!" and she danced around the room.

Father's merry voice was heard, and they went down.

"Well, how did school go?" he asked, lifting her in his arms.

"Rhoda went off and left her," said the mother.

There it might have stopped, but Tip would have it all explained.

"And then I was lost," began Laurel. "And



there was such a nice lady who gave me some cake and milk and the old gentleman said we must all come. And he was very old, but so nice, and Letty brought me home."

"What was the man's name?"

"Over—something—I can't say it right. And the lady was Mrs. Gray. And there was a pretty lady and a big stoop, and a great entry. And a pussy bigger than the one at the barn. I was so tired. I had run real hard. But I sha'n't run away any more."

Rhoda turned very red but made no defense.

The other children had a good deal to say as well, but they seemed very much pleased to get at school once more, "though I'd like to be eighteen," said Prim, "and through with it all. But I wonder what I'd do next!"

"I'm going to build an engine and a railroad, and I'll go out to Arizona and get a load of the queer things they dig out of the earth, that the other people left there."

"What people?"

"Well the people that came before the Indians. No one can tell much about them. But I'd find out."

"A laudable ambition, Tip," said his father.

"Then I'd build a boat and go up to the North



Pole. What do you suppose it's like! It must be very big if the world can swing round on it. And what fastens it at the other end?"

"Tip, you'll be an explorer, sure," said Mr. Mann.

"And I'm going to college. Bella Martin's sister is going to Mr. Smith's College, and she will have to stay there four years," declared Rhoda.

"It will cost a good deal," interposed Linn. "And may be Mr. Smith will die before that time. Then what will become of the college?"

They all laughed and Rhoda flared up inside, but she was trying to be on her best behavior.

Take it all together, the week passed very comfortably. Goldie learned a new crochet pattern called pineapple, and kept her good marks all through the week. But the happiest of the eight was Laurel, and she thought going to school splendid. She had cut out ten lovely frocks for a paper doll and was learning "Twice one is two," and could spell ever so many words. Every night she wanted her father to hear her.

"Mother," Rhoda said during the second week, "the girls are going to have a picnic on Saturday. They are going to Birds' Woods just by themselves. There are ten of them. We'll take some luncheon and we'll play and have the best time."



"All little girls?"

"Yes. We don't want any big folks. We're going just for fun."

"I don't know that I quite approve of ten little girls going as far as Birds' Woods. And, Rhoda, I said I should punish you for being so unkind to Laurel that first day of school. You are getting altogether too masterful, and you answer back very impertinently at times. You are only a little girl as yet, and occasionally I feel quite ashamed of you. So I shall begin to correct you by depriving you of some pleasure."

"Oh, Mother!" the child flung out, stamping her foot.

"There! Go and sit quietly in the library for ten minutes. That will close the present score, and we will begin anew. If you must cry, do it softly, or you will be taken to the garret."

Rhoda did cry, but she did not dare to bawl. She was very angry. She had grown very "bossy" of late, Linn declared to his mother, and occasionally the girls protested. She would have delighted in damaging something in the spasm of temper, but she hardly dared. Not go to the picnic! Why, she *could* run away, but she would want some luncheon. Oh, it was mean! The older girls had been out to tea at the home of one of their mates.



And she couldn't do anything just because Laurel wouldn't follow on that day!

Then she spied out two schoolbooks she had laid on the table. She liked the history and took it up, studying it with a vim. She was so interested that she forgot for about ten minutes. Then she took her speller. She would know her lessons.

"How many of you want to go over to Denby?" asked Dan, looking in the window.

"I do," Prim quickly answered. "I'll ask Mother."

Mother said, "Oh, yes."

"I'll take the two-seat then."

Goldie and Laurel joined and Dan drove round and picked them up. They had a nice drive and nodded here and there where some one sat at the windows. Rhoda opened her heart to Primrose about the picnic.

"I suppose Mother doesn't think it quite safe, just you little girls. It isn't as if you were at some one's house."

"But there couldn't anything happen."

"Yes, there might be a snake. Or a fierce cow. Or some bad boys. There ought to be some big girl. You know some of the mothers went with us. What a glorious time we had! Can't you persuade some of the big sisters?"



"Why, we might." Then she remembered she couldn't go, anyway. And her mother had forbidden them to tease their father about any pleasure she had refused them. Oh, if she were grown up and could go where she pleased!

They met some of the Denby schoolgirls and had a chat. They stopped at the store and Mr. Beers teased them a little. Altogether it was a gala time.

"Does beat all how them children fly round," said a rather cross-grained neighbor. "Dan can't do much work but just go pleasin' with them. I dare say they've forgot they ever lived in that little old red house. Oh, they'll stick up top of the heap. But when that man's gone the money'll go too, I'm thinkin'. He don't own the whole world."

They came home in fine spirits. And a few days after Rhoda found the mothers generally disapproved of such small children going off by themselves, and so the plan fell through.

Chan had a letter from Mr. Gwynne. He would be in New York early in October and he wanted to make some new plans about the boy's music.

O dear! if it could be *all* music! He did not love such lessons as physics and algebra and language.

"And all the relationships! It's like the chapters in the Bible where this was the son of that



one, and this the son of some one else, and so on."

"Yet you bother about those quarters and eighths, and above the clef and below it, and two beats to this, that twist me all up, though I hammer away at it because it pleases Mr. Evans so. And I do like the singing. He thinks I'm going to have a pretty good voice, though, of course, not like yours. But let me take hold of that algebra with you. I'm bound to enter the senior class in February, and then ho for the high school next summer!"

Linn was very good to Rilla as well. She was rather slow, but painstaking, a fine reader and very fond of beautiful little poems. She did not think she should want to be a teacher unless the children were quick at understanding, and she dreaded the thought of the high school, aside from the fact that it would please her father so much. Goldie was bright and quick, but Prim was so full of nonsense! She had a good memory, which was almost a misfortune as she could skim over lessons and remember them about three days. And she could think up many ridiculous things.

So one day Miss Gordon said to Ella Minton, "Will you go to the blackboard and do the third example, explaining it to the class as you go along? It is rather difficult."



Ella was the best scholar in the class, and was not a little proud of it. So she began carefully. Miss Gordon said she was going to make a fine teacher.

Prim followed a little way. Oh, it would be easy enough. Then her evil genius came to the fore. On a bit of paper she began to sketch something. It proved to be an immense grasshopper. His long jointed legs stuck up as if he had just jumped. And oh, what big black eyes that almost winked at you!

She folded the paper at the top, tentwise, and stood it up. The girl next to her put her hand over her mouth lest she should laugh.

"That is very well done, Miss Ella. Now please rub it out. Girls, I want every one of you to work it out on a fresh paper. Thank you for your clear explanation, Ella."

The girl turned to her seat. Primrose stood up her grasshopper on Ella's desk and he did look just ready for a jump. As Ella turned, it swayed a little.

"Oh!" she cried and drew back. "Oh!"

The girls nearest giggled.

"What is the matter?" asked Miss Gordon.

Ella sat down covered with confusion, very much startled.



"Will some one answer?" Miss Gordon rose.

"It's a—a grasshopper," said a girl. By this time the laugh was going round.

"How did it come there?"

Ella glared upbraidingly at Prim, who rose in her seat.

"It was something I did, Miss Gordon."

"Bring it to me."

Primrose walked up the aisle, her face growing scarlet, and laid the offender down on the teacher's desk.

Miss Gordon did want to laugh. The fellow looked so real, so saucy.

"Go to your seat. Now, girls," in an authoritative tone, "you will see how many of you can do the sum correctly. I regret the interruption."

The fun could not subside in a moment. Primrose took her seat and began to figure gravely on her pad, but she could not recall the first steps of the problem, how it was written on the board. Oh if she could go out and have one good laugh! She worked away, but she made mistakes. One and another held up her hand and then took her pad to Miss Gordon's desk. The recess bell rang.

"Miss Firth will remain until she has finished the example."



Ella bent over her and pointed out two mistakes. Then she gave the hand a squeeze.

Prim began again but the moments flew so fast. The next was physics.

"Miss Gordon," she asked, "can I go in to the class? I'll finish the sum at noon. I do know the lesson."

Miss Gordon felt that she ought to refuse and thus punish her doubly, but the girl's eyes were so entreating.

"Yes, you may," she answered.

Primrose had a perfect recitation. But the physics teacher wondered what the covert smiles meant.

Quite a number of girls from a distance brought lunches and one recitation-room was devoted to them. Prim went at her sum with vigor. She was pretty good at figures. At last it was finished and she took it up to the desk.

"Primrose, I suppose you really did this?" turning over the cause of the commotion.

"Yes'm," with downcast eyes.

"You will lose two days' department marks. And next Friday is composition day. I want you to write every fact that you can find about a grasshopper. I don't believe he was any laughing



matter in Pharaoh's time. It was a dreadful thing for you to do."

"Yes," returned Primrose meekly. "But I thank you for letting me go in to physics."

The girls were awaiting her at the luncheon-room. Then they gave way to a chorus of mirth.

"You know as I turned to take my seat the paper wavered and for an instant I thought it was real," explained Ella. "I wasn't exactly scared but I wonder I didn't scream."

"It was dreadful and foolish and I've lost two days' deportment for it. I was straight all last week—only missed in examples. Oh, girls, I don't know what is inside of my brain and it just flashes out, and like Pandora's box you can't get any of it back again. But I promised Father I'd try my best and here I never tried at all. O dear! I'm a hopeless case," and she hugged up her knees, rocking to and fro. "And now I've got that awful composition to write. Were grasshoppers instituted in Egypt? Don't any of you know?"

No one could tell more than that they were among the plagues.

Linn could not help laughing over it, but he wished Miss Gordon had not confiscated the drawing. Amaryllis took it seriously, and Mrs. Mann



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had a kind of hopeless air. Mr. Mann laughed at Goldie's vivid description, and shook his head.

"Of course I'll be the black sheep of the family," Prim said mournfully. "And my hair is yellow."

Davy Mears did not come to Miss Raynor's. Mrs. Mears started an opposition school in a small room off of her kitchen and found five children. Miss Hunt came afternoons and taught until five, her mornings being devoted to Gladys Chedister. She came in to play with Laurel and Amy Boyce, while the weather was pleasant. Rhoda was very much engrossed with a new pursuit, that of drawing. But she made such grotesque work of it that Tip teased her and said he could do better with his eyes shut.

Mrs. Mann looked at the children sometimes in half-despair. They were growing so fast; they had so many wants and ideas and plans. Cap was good and cheerful and would insist on shouldering the hardest of the work.

"You see you couldn't have done without me," said Mr. Mann laughingly.



## CHAPTER III

### LOVE TO ONE'S NEIGHBOR

AMARYLLIS and Linn seemed to shoot up suddenly. He was taking on big-boy ways but they were not disagreeable. He went down on Saturday to the city with his father and earned half a dollar. He wanted a baseball outfit.

"And we are all going to cost so much! Mother, which are the most expensive, boys or girls?" he asked.

"I think boys wear out the most clothes, especially shoes. I'm glad to have you think of these things, Linn. You have such a good father, but there are so many of you."

"It would be better if we could grow up in two or three years. And it does take a good while for education."

Mrs. Mann used to wonder how she would get along without Amaryllis, who was so sweet and thoughtful, perhaps a little too serious, but they were dear friends and companions. The others were the children. Amaryllis kept up in her



lessons and her music. She was beginning to play some pretty tunes and her father took great delight in them. Not that she made a recluse of herself; she went out quite often with Linn among the older girls and boys. And the five were always welcome guests at the Bradleys', and as soon as the Brenners returned they were asked there. Mrs. Chedister did wonder a little what people saw in them. But she let Gladys go out driving with them and the child was delighted.

Amaryllis kept up her interest in Eunice Williams. Eunice's mother would not admit that she approved of it, and said it was a waste of time to be "canterin' round," but she was secretly proud that Eunice should have such a friend.

"But you needn't set your heart too much on it," she said. "She's as likely to drop you and take up some one else."

They tried to find a day for Eunice to come over, but there was always so much to do with the shop-work.

"This would be a nice plan," said Rilla. "I might come over Saturday for you just at the edge of the evening, and bring you home Sunday night. And you could go to church—you'd like Mr. Evans so, and now you don't always have a minister. And we'd have the long day to talk and to



take walks and look at the pictures—we have some fine books now. And we sing—you'll like to hear Chan. Oh I think your mother will consent."

She did not do it very readily, though she was quite elated. But she felt she must keep Amaryllis in her proper place, whatever that was—the little Firth girl of the old house in the lane. Some day the fortune might take wings and fly away.

But Eunice was not caviling in her delight. The sun had gone down in a bed of October brilliancy. And the sky was settling now in a softened remembrance of what had been. The thrush was still lingering over his evening song. How beautiful and peaceful it all was! And there was something in the face of Amaryllis Firth that went to the girl's heart. It was so sweet and comforting.

They did not go directly home, but went round by the Creamery. It was improving very much. There were two quite long streets cut into blocks, and there were some rather pretty cottages. Why, it had quite a thrifty look! And the big house had been enlarged and now had a hall through the middle where a light was shining.

"I tried to walk out here one Sunday, but I grew very tired. I don't see what makes me tire so easily. I didn't use to at school," said Eunice.

"Perhaps you stay in the house too much."



"But Mother doesn't do very well on the machine. She hurries along so. But she's swift at all the other work. Oh, I wish we didn't have to do it! So many women are putting money in the bank. Father has his place clear, and now both of the boys are at work. But I won't think of that, and we will just have a good time."

And a delightful time it was from the moment that they entered the house. Mrs. Mann gave Eunice a cordial welcome. Linn was a real gentleman. You could hardly believe he had been a Denby boy. And Chan had certainly grown beautiful.

The piano was liquid melody. And they sang and talked between, the younger children went to bed, Mrs. and Mr. Greer came in, and there was a most entertaining talk. Then Mr. Mann began to put out the lights and they all said good-night.

Oh, how lovely and peaceful the spare chamber was! The moon was coming up. It made Eunice think of something in "Pilgrim's Progress." This would be one of the restful stations. She used to wonder in these nights, when she couldn't sleep very well, what heaven would be like. It was rest and peace and the beautiful river, the songs of the redeemed, the flowers that went on blossom-



ing in the everlasting life all about. And rest was so much to tired bodies and souls.

The morning was superb again. And this merry host with their sweet mother and delightful father reminded her of some of the books in the library.

Tip and the twins did not go to church. Tip was restless and liked Sunday school better. Laurel generally went to sleep, and Rhoda wished Mr. Evans would say something she could understand. The sermon always made her back ache.

To Eunice it was a sort of revelation. They had tried one very flowery young man two Sundays, then he had received a call elsewhere. There had been two or three rather prosy old men, and sometimes no one. Several times Mr. Evans had been over to a funeral. Between whiles, Deacon Timlow read a sermon.

"Oh, I do like your Mr. Evans so much!" said Eunice. "You can follow what he says so easily. I'm afraid I did not pay much attention to Mr. Burnham; perhaps I had so many other things on my mind. Mrs. Burnham was very nice. But I do wish we could have a kind minister. I don't know what makes me think more of these things—you know I don't have the girls or lessons to talk about. And I just live your visits over again.



Oh, Rilla, what a lovely home! It's so good of you to ask me over here," and she clasped her arms about her young friend's neck. "And the children are so nice."

They were merry at dinner, then all but Rilla went to Sunday school. They sat out in the swing and talked, and Mr. Evans came home with the children. They always had tea on Sunday and Cap left strict injunctions that not a dish should be washed. Then they had some delightful singing. Chan went to church with Mr. Evans, and Linn said he would drive with Eunice and Rilla.

"I've had such a lovely time, Rilla. It seems like a little bit out of heaven. Yet you haven't made the fuss over meals that Mother often does. If the boys were not so rough and careless! It keeps Mother scolding half the time. She says I've grown fidgety and am sure to be an old maid. But I think Miss Weed has real good times."

"I do hope you can come over again. Cold weather doesn't make any difference with us; the house is nice and warm. And Mother will be glad to have you. And you haven't half seen the books, and there's so much more to talk about."

"Oh, I want to. I feel so much stronger and better. Rilla, I love you dearly, more than any girl I ever knew."



"Thank you, dear. It is warmly returned. And anything I can do——"

"I can't do anything for you," and there were tears in the girl's eyes.

"Well, love is a sweet thing, a great gift. And giving joy and comfort to those who need—and they are not always the real poor—is one of the good works Mr. Evans preaches about. Mother says we have had so much given to us that we must give to others, as they have need."

Mrs. Mann pressed Eunice warmly to come again, and Mr. Mann said a week with them would give her pink cheeks.

Mr. and Mrs. Williams were sitting on the porch, she with a shawl around her.

"Well, you *have* stayed!" was her greeting. "And Aunt Randy and Uncle Joe were over to dinner, and no one to do a hand's turn for me! Aunt Randy's crippled up with rheumatism. Well, I hope you had a good time."

"It was very good, and I'm thankful," returned Eunice quietly.

"And I s'pose the girls are trigged out in all sorts of finery to match the house. And both of them biggest boys have gold watches."

"No, they are quite plainly dressed, but the



house is beautiful, and the piano is the sweetest I ever heard."

"And you've heard so many!" said her mother. "Oh, Eunice, do sit down and be a little sociable and tell us how you like the stepfather."

"He's very nice, and so fond of them all." But Eunice felt that she would rather go upstairs and cry, the atmosphere was so different.

At the other house Mr. Mann said:

"That girl looks very poorly, according to my thinking."

"Indeed she does. And her lips have scarcely any color in them. I should feel troubled. And she is the only girl they have. They are in fairly comfortable circumstances, too. But Denby people think a great deal of a little money."

"It's a good servant but a hard master. The offertory verses this morning were fine. 'To do good and to distribute' was one of them. Bessy, I'm glad you are on the distributing order," and he gave her a squeeze.

Amaryllis was much exercised about Eunice, but when she went over the next Saturday she found her bright, and really looking better.

The three older children had a nice chatty letter from Mr. Collamore. His journey had been very satisfactory. He had found his son much im-



proved, quite sensible, and a rather promising student. He had taken him to Paris and they had both enjoyed the trip, but he was going to leave him at school another year.

Then the loveliest of all was Mr. Gwynne's return. He was going to give three concerts in New York, and the family were booked for one, and they would have a box to themselves.

School prospered with the children. Laurel was very proud of her attainments, but she would only display them to Rilla and her mother.

They had driven up to Farmer Dent's to dinner one Saturday, and had come home early. Linn was studying energetically and trying to master baseball by brief spells.

"I don't believe he is worth the half-dollar to you, and you pay his fare besides," said the mother.

"Bessy, you think me over-indulgent. It was the boy's offer, and he sticks to it pluckily. He does see into business, and it isn't a bad thing for him to earn some of his pleasures. Trust me I shall not get them spoiled over-much."

Chan and Prim were learning to ride Bonnie. Rilla was a very good driver, though she was a little shy of Lady Betty. And one evening, to



their great surprise, Mr. Gwynne came up with their father.

He wanted to take Chan over to Ridgewood to an old Italian music-master who only taught a few pupils now.

"Of course it is a splendid natural voice. But he must learn how to conserve it. We cannot afford to have a note go wrong, nor have it spoiled by any false training. And this man has trained some of the finest opera singers. Then next Wednesday night you are to come down and hear the cornets. Is there a late train, or can you stay all night?"

"There is a theater train on Wednesday night at 11:10," said Mr. Mann.

"Oh, we couldn't think of staying all night with so many," declared the mother.

"How many?" laughing. "Prim and Goldie sure."

"And three others," said Mrs. Mann. "Tip and the twins are too young to appreciate it, and we couldn't take the whole eight."

"As you decide. There will be time enough for them. Music won't die out," laughingly returned Mr. Gwynne.

Chan was not very enthusiastic, but he made no



special demur. He liked his own way of singing and didn't want to give it up.

There was so much to hear on both sides that they were quite late getting off. Dan drove them over to Ridgewood and found Wilton Terrace. It was up a series of steps, a real terrace; with a few odd detached houses and only a block long.

There was nothing formidable about Signor Vincenzo. He had a high forehead with thin, curling hair and large soft black eyes. He was of barely average size, and rather thin with a little stoop in the shoulders, but a very pleasant voice.

"Ah," he exclaimed after a moment, "it is the Signor Gwynne. Why, I have not spoken with you in a long while. I am glad to see you. Surely this is not your son? I have heard of no wife."

"My son by adoption and love of music. I have brought him to you—well, for a little training. You shaped up Walter Clifford finely. I met him abroad in the summer. He was to make an essay in opera early in November. And this is another of my finds."

"Ah! One can trust you, not always the voice. What does he know?"

"I think he catches tunes mostly by ear, and then follows the notes. He has sung only in



church music, except the little things around home. I want him to study from the foundation up. And you take so few pupils nowadays."

"I am getting old. There are so many new teachers, new methods that take the sweetness out of voices. Yet I will try him. What shall we take?"

They turned over a pile of music and found the Portuguese Hymn.

"I can sing that in the English words. I don't know any other language."

"Well, let us try that." The signor played a few notes. Chan's voice was not quite steady, he was a little afraid of the dark eyes, then the music conquered, and the voice swelled out in its sweetness. The man watched him in amazement.

"What do you mean me to do with that voice?" he asked.

"I want you to teach him the rudiments of music, and how to use his voice so that it will not be harmed. It has some wonderful properties. Chan, sing a little of the bird song."

Chan hesitated. If only Goldie were there! But he did want to please Mr. Gwynne.

His voice was a trifle shaky at first—somehow it was a part of the old house and he had come to know there were many beautiful places in the



world and much heavenly music, but if his hearer wanted this, he would do his best—and the voice swelled out, quivered, dropped into sweetest melody, then danced up in the highest trees, calling some far-off mate that answered at a distance, then came nearer, and he paused.

“What are the words?” the man asked. “He must be a genius who wrote them.”

“There are no words. He and his sister have the music in their brain. But I have adapted it to the cornet and am making a stir with it,” replied Mr. Gwynne, smiling. “You must come and hear. Wednesday evening is the first concert, and my little boy will be there to listen.”

“I don’t understand,” said the professor, shaking his head. “You must have unearthed a prodigy. Look over these. There are some old chants that they sing in church.”

The boy stopped at the first one he found. It was the *Venite*. The master struck the key, and then listened in surprise.

“I will take your boy, Gwynne, partly for my own pleasure. You may be sure I shall not allow a note to go astray. When can he come? He is here at school, you said.”

“There is no school at Grafton. Yes, he could come any afternoon. Begin with only one lesson



a week, as he is studying the piano as well. Friday afternoon; then he will be through."

The signor shook his head.

"And have the week's fatigue in his voice, in his whole system. No, Monday will be better. Can you find your way home alone?"

"I could from the school."

"They can send for him. The man is often out doing errands."

Signor Vincenzo nodded. "About six, then. We don't want to hurry."

"No. Take good care of him. He's my boy," and Mr. Gwynne smiled, as they said good-by, and walked over to take the trolley-car.

"You'll like him, Chan, And you won't mind if he speaks sharply now and then? I sometimes fly out in a little temper when my people are careless."

"I shall try to be careful. Music is such a beautiful thing that it ought to hurt you to mangle it."

"I think it would hurt *you*, Chan. You are all music."

The heads of the family agreed to whatever Mr. Gwynne thought best. And they were to come down Wednesday afternoon and dine with him.



Tip and Rhoda were a little disgruntled. Mrs. Mann felt that she really ought not go, but there was no other course, as Mr. Mann was to meet them at the station. And Cap rushed boldly into the breach. They would have a grand good time and she would make a fruit pudding.

They were quite used to the journey now. Mr. Gwynne met them and they went to the hotel, but they could hardly eat, they were so full of expectancy. There would be quite a while to wait, and he must be looking after his performers. They could have a ride in the auto. The streets were not crowded now.

It was still early when the usher conducted them to the box. Signor Vincenzo was there and was at once interested in the group and decided that the curly-headed girl might be musical, but that the others were not. And he talked to Mr. Mann about Chandler and found that his heart was full of love for the boy. Wouldn't he and Mr. Gwynne quarrel about him some day?

The conductor came for a brief greeting, and gave them a bright smile. Then the people were crowding in, the lights flashed. Oh what a fine house it was! Ladies shone and glittered in jewels, silks rustled, there was whispering, and



one smiled and nodded to another. Then the overture began, and it was really fine.

The number was by a famous pianist, who was well known in the Old World. Then a violoncello was played by a master hand. The children listened entranced. Then came two fine French horns, a violin duet with a fascinating chorus, and then the two cornets.

Chan and Goldie clasped hands and glanced eagerly into each other's eyes.

The sweet, low, soft tone, the pause, then the call again, blown about a little by the wind, then a far-off faint answer and a sudden burst of melody, as if the woodland birds had just woke. One heard the different tones, and wondered how they could use so many and have them so clear. There was a saucy robin, and Goldie looked up and laughed. There were the dainty song-sparrow, the gay mocking-bird, and then the wildest chorus, as if each was striving to outdo the other. Hark! That was the plaintive wood-robin, and then the long, sleepy notes dropping out, starting up again but slower, softer, until you fairly felt the twilight, and then all was still, so still that you could hear your neighbor breathe.

There followed a burst of applause that seemed as if it would never stop. Mr. Gwynne stood with



the two musicians and bowed. There were no encores, as the same performers would appear again later in the evening.

Chan leaned his head on the signor's shoulder, and it seemed as if he could not breathe.

"Oh," said Goldie in an awesome kind of whisper, "it's a hundred times finer than anything we ever did! Oh, we didn't earn the piano! How could Mr. Gwynne make it so beautiful!"

"You didn't have any cornets," said Linn. "I never dreamed they could be so splendid."

"Very few can play that way," added the signor. "Mr. Gwynne has done some marvelous training, and had some fine material to work upon."

"Well!" exclaimed a joyous voice near them.

Chan raised his face. His eyes overflowed with tears, and his lips quivered.

"There isn't any word, Mr. Gwynne," said Primrose. "There must be a new dictionary. I've been in an enchanted country. And Goldie and Chan are crying because they know they did not earn the piano truly."

Signor Vincenzo glanced in a puzzled way from one child to another, and to Mr. Gwynne, puzzled.

"Some day you shall hear the story. Amaryllis, are you paid for coming?"



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"Oh, it was too lovely! I could only think of the morning stars singing together. For I think they did not sing in words."

Mrs. Mann held out her hand in silence.

"You have made a mark," said the signor.

Chan could not speak, but hid his face again.

Mr. Gwynne said he would see them presently, and went back to his performers.

The cornet-players distinguished themselves again, but there was not quite the intense enthusiasm. They must come again if they wanted to hear the song of the birds. But the last half of the program was very fine.

"Chan, dear," the conductor said softly as he lifted the boy in the auto, "you are too intense. You must take things more moderately or you will burn to ashes." And to the mother he said, "Let him sleep as long as he will to-morrow. Never mind about school."



## CHAPTER IV

### EUNICE

DAN drove them from the station and then took Signor Vincenzo home. They were all very tired, and their mother charged them not to disturb Chan in the morning.

The others were barely in time for school. It was almost noon when Chan woke, and he wondered if he had been in heaven.

"Mr. Gwynne said you were not to go to school to-day," his mother remarked. "I never thought music could tire you so."

"It was so lovely. Oh, I don't see how Mr. Gwynne could do it so wonderfully. And those cornet-players! Oh, I'd like to have a cornet!"

"You'd blow all your breath away."

"Well, it's comforting to sing beautiful things, I don't seem to care for the common cries. They don't raise you up. And, oh, Mother, the man who played on the piano! I thought no one could play so beautifully as Mr. Gwynne, and I was almost vexed when he said there were those who



played better. I do suppose the signor could. But that man took your whole soul along with him, just as the organ does. O dear!"

"Does your head ache?"

"Oh, no. Only I'll lose a lot of marks to-morrow. I wish I didn't have to go to school."

"Oh, Chan!"

They had to talk it all over and over, and Goldie tried to get some of the exquisite tunes.

"There's no use," insisted Chan. "That we did is like the little old red house. We've outgrown that. And we've outgrown the song. It was the common, every-day country birds, but Mr. Gwynne made them all over. I'm glad little Arthur heard them, and though there'll be finer music in heaven, I'm glad that took some of his pain away."

Mr. Gwynne wrote them a nice long letter from Chicago, where he was engaged for three weeks, after which he must go to San Francisco.

Thanksgiving came, and they had a very merry time. Then they were asked out here and there. They couldn't decide what they wanted for Christmas. Tip had learned to ride Bonnie, and said he didn't want any measly goat around. Then he asked if goats really had the measles?



His mother thought no one but children had that disease.

"If I ever go to Central Park again, I'll just give that goat one kick, I bet."

Mrs. Mann laughed. She was too wise to argue any point with Tip.

Amaryllis tried to have Eunice come over another Sunday, but Mrs. Williams insisted that she couldn't spare her until after Christmas. Then they heard that she was quite ill with a cold.

"I'm so tired all the time," she said to Rilla. "And we're going to have a lot of company at Christmas. One of the cousins is going to be married Christmas eve, and they are coming over here to dinner. I'd like to go somewhere. Oh, you'll have a lovely time at your house."

Eunice was flushed, and coughed a good deal, while her eyes had a feverish light.

"I do hope she'll be better in a day or two. She's never been real well since she was studying so hard for that examination. And she knew enough, I'm sure! She's a good housekeeper and can sew first-rate. That cough is just bronicle and Mrs. Beers has it every winter. It doesn't kill any one. But I think I'll have the doctor tomorrow. I want her to get well. Though it doesn't seem to me that doctors do much good."



Mrs. Williams, thus speaking, had followed close upon Amaryllis and stood undecided, twisting the corner of her apron, but she thought of her cooking downstairs that needed her attention.

"Don't let her talk much, Rilla. I think sick people ought to be quiet as possible;" and she went down reluctantly.

"Oh, Rilla," exclaimed Eunice, "that was such a nice Sunday at your house, when we sat on the porch while Mr. Evans talked. I wish we had such a minister, but we don't seem to get anybody. They think they can't afford to pay as much as they gave Mr. Burnham. Mrs. Burnham did make the Sunday school real entertaining. Mrs. Wilson said Mr. Evans was so nice to old Granny Keen. Rilla, if I'm sick a long while, do you think you could bring him over to see me? I get so lonesome. But I don't want that common talk about the work and clothes and such things. I've been reading some in the New Testament, and it's wonderful, isn't it? How good Christ was to the sick and the poor!"

Then there was the fit of coughing that the girl tried in vain to strangle. Amaryllis handed her the mixture her mother had made.

"I'd like to hear him talk as he did that Sunday. Won't you ask him, Rilla?"



"Oh, I know he would come! Yes, I'll ask him. And as soon as you *do* get better, you must come over and make a real visit. Mother'll be glad to have you to nurse up."

"You are so good. Oh, this cough gives me such a sharp pain, like a knife sticking into me! I want the doctor, too. Oh if I could get well!"

Rilla kissed the fevered cheek and went downstairs.

"I was just going to call you. Eunice *will* talk if there's any one there," was the remark with which Mrs. Williams met her.

Rilla colored and hesitated. Of course she must ask Mrs. Williams if Mr. Evan's call would be allowable. The lady frowned.

"Now, Miss Rilla Firth, you needn't think you can order who shall come, especially a minister. Eunice is going to get well and I won't have any talk about dyin'. I'm going to finish up the work this week, and not take any more, so's I'll have time to tend to her. It'll be a little dull until in the New Year. And there's the weddin'. I'm going to get Eunice a real pretty frock; she's earned quite a bit of money. No, I don't want any ministers just yet, and when I do I can send for 'em."

"Good-by," said Amaryllis gently.

She went over to the Lewises, who were glad to



see her and coaxed her to stay to supper, but she could not.

"And how is Eunice?" they asked.

"She coughs dreadfully."

"It's my opinion," said Mrs. Lewis, "she's a very sick girl. She's coughed all the fall and had a little rise of fever 'most every day. And the way she has run that old machine! The only girl they have, too! The women here seem to be bewitched about shop-work. Mary thinks she'll go in for dress-making."

"There's such a variety to it," said Marty. "And you get a chance to see pretty clothes. There's a women over at Ridgewood who'll give you your board through the week. I think I'll try that."

"Do you think Eunice seriously ill?" asked Amaryllis.

"Well *I* do," answered Mrs. Lewis. "I guess I frightened her yesterday into having the doctor. Has he been there to-day?"

"He is coming to-morrow," Mrs. Williams said.

"Well I hope she hasn't waited too long. Eunice is such a nice, ladylike girl."

Rilla went home in an anxious mood. But there were visitors in the evening and they had to talk over the wonderful concert, though the story of



the piano was kept a family secret. As she was going to school, she paused and said:

"Dan, will you drive over to Denby and inquire about Eunice Williams?"

Her mother's face had an unwonted gravity.

"My dear," she said, "Eunice was taken very bad in the night, and the doctor says it is double pneumonia, and the nurse must not leave her. They sent for Mrs. Wilson. The poor child is so run down that it will go hard with her."

Rilla wiped away some quick tears.

She went over the next day but one. The fever was running very high and Eunice was delirious most of the time. The doctor gave very little hope.

Rilla wondered if anything could be done. She wrote Mrs. Wilson a note, and the reply was that Eunice had passed quietly away, leaving Mrs. Williams nearly distracted.

It did create quite a stir in the village. Of course Mr. Evans was sent for to conduct the funeral. "If she could only have seen him!" Rilla thought. Mrs. Mann and Rilla went over, and it seemed as if all the neighbors turned out. Mrs. Williams was inconsolable.

"We just have to leave these matters to God," Mr. Evans said when she gained courage to tell



him what Eunice had desired. "I am very sorry, for I would have given her what comfort I could. Many of the old-fashioned people cannot bear to talk about death. We are not trained to think of it as the open door into the other country. I wish we could look at it in that light, as we must all pass the door alone, but we shall find friends there. And Miss Eunice seemed to me very simple and childlike, reaching out for the unknown good and believing in it. Of such souls is the Kingdom of Heaven. So we just leave them with God."

"Oh," she said with deep feeling. "He will take care of them and, I hope, give them what they have longed for and missed here. I can't help thinking that she didn't care much about the life she was living here."

"Perhaps she has the 'better thing.' I am glad you wished it for her. You have only to go on in good works."

Was Christmas such a little way off? Chan was learning a Christmas anthem and his whole soul was wrapped up in it. No wonder he missed lessons and went astray in examples. Mr. Gwynne came hurrying back and presented himself at the signor's on Monday afternoon.

"It is simply wonderful," said the master. "A boy like that with the voice of an angel! I feel



afraid sometimes that it will vanish, to reappear among the heavenly choir."

"It's so beautifud," exclaimed Chan, "It sings itself continually in my mind, and sometimes I cannot hear what people are saying. Oh, can you think what it would be to live in a country where they were singing such things always?"

It was one of the exquisite anthems for Easter even.

"And you wouldn't be afraid to sing it in a large church in New York? I have promised that you will."

"Why, no; not if they liked my singing. I should see the plain and the shepherds and hear the good tidings of the angels and the song of the heavenly host. Oh, no, I shouldn't feel afraid."

He looked so fearless, so rapt, that Mr. Gwynne experienced a curious pang.

The professor ran over the score and the sweet voice took up the theme without a falter anywhere. Howard Gwynne was deeply moved.

"You will go down with us," he said to Vincenzo. "Chandler, I am going to take you to New York to sing this anthem on Christmas eve. We shall not be gone long, and you will be home in time to see Santa Claus."



"It's funny," exclaimed Chan with a child's eagerness," but we gave up telling what we wanted for Christmas, for we really couldn't decide, so we are going to leave it all to Father. Tip has given up his goat since he learned to ride, though he thinks he wouldn't mind a 'flosser-pede,' as he calls it. But—I'll have to go away—will Mother consent?"

"Yes. It will be just the professor and you and myself. We are to be at the church at seven. Service is at eight, just evening prayer and then the anthem. You can imagine you are at St. Mark's. I doubt if there is a very large congregation."

There was quite a time at school which closed on Thursday noon. Chan went over to the professors who took him down to the station, where to his surprise he saw Mr. Evans as well as Mr. Gwynne. The church was fragrant and beautiful, but at first in a sort of twilight. Chan thought the organ grand, far beyond anything he had heard. There was a small choir, with the surpliced boys and some larger singers. But the church was not very full.

Evening prayer began. Yes, the chants were fine and Chan thought he would like to be among



the boys in their white robes. If they could have them at St. Mark's!

Out of the reverent hush came the firm, sweet, uplifted voice:

“‘ And there were shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were afraid. And the angel said unto them——’ ”

And then came the grand chorus, but they could follow the sweet voice through it all. The audience listened breathlessly. Like a picture the voice had presented to all the solemn night, the awe of the shepherds, the wonderful harmony, the clinging chords, so instinct with faith, with the highest belief.

The benediction fell over it all, and there was a moment of golden silence. Only a few clasped the child's hand, for Mr. Gwynne wrapped him up and hurried him away.

“ I told you how it would be,” said Vincenzo, in a tone of triumph. “ If he were two years older I should bring him out at once. There would be some fine years, and I think you need never fear for the voice unless he is made to work too hard. He was born with the gift. And he has



another that you may not know. He will be a composer some day."

Gwynne nodded.

He had to bid him good-by at the train for Christmas day was full to overflowing. He would have liked to keep Chan for the oratorio, but there would be other opportunities.

Chan snuggled up to the professor, but he was not sleepy with the tones of that glorious organ floating through his brain. Yet he did not want to talk. He felt, like Prim, that no words were good enough.

Dan and his father met them at Ridgewood and took the signor home, then spun over to Grafton. There was the sleepy grate fire and the row of stockings that made him laugh. Prim and Goldie were hugged up on the floor. Rilla sat just back of them.

"Oh, Chan!" exclaimed his mother. It seemed as if he had come from some great danger.

"You can't imagine how splendid it was in the beautiful church with its greens and scarlet berries and the boy choir in their pretty cottas! I wish we had some."

"And you weren't a bit frightened! I should have lost my voice." said Linn.

"Oh, but I *wanted* to sing it. I'd like to go



round the world and sing it every Christmas eve. Oh, it was so beautiful! You know God couldn't let you feel afraid when you were worshipping him that way. And Mr. Evans had tears in his eyes. I am to sing it for him to-morrow, but it can't be like that, for the organ isn't so grand."

"Then you had better take a drink of hot milk and go to bed," said his mother. "We must all go, or Santa Claus won't venture to come."

The fires were banked, the stockings were funny, and yet to Mr. Mann it was not like last Christmas. Was it because they were all older? Or was it because his little boy, the one he had coveted first of all, would surely go out of the home circle? The great hungry world would hold out golden chains, dazzling chains for him. Well it would be right. It would be selfish and cruel to stand in his light.

"When they are all gone I shall still have you, Bessy," he said, holding her to his heart.

"Oh, the world will not want them all," she returned.

"No. We shall be pretty sure to keep Amaryllis. And she grows so like you."

Christmas morning dawned serenely, and the church was really crowded. Several new families



had come in. And Chandler sang his best, and it was inspiring.

The "beautifullest mother" acceded to their pleading and put on her wedding gown, though she felt it was rather silly. They did not ask in any guests. Another year the children would want some of their friends, no doubt. But after the dinner had been cleared away and Cap had gone home laden with Christmas gifts, there began a sort of reception. The Bradleys came over to congratulate Chan, then one and another dropped in even to the Consadine brothers, who seemed somehow to have shrunken and were more formal than ever.

The Christmas gifts had been largely useful, except the Shetland pony and the pretty basket carriage that was to belong expressly to the twins, who were wild with delight. Laurel was improving a good deal and had become quite a scholar. Rhoda grew rapidly. She thought she might have her hair braided now; curls looked so babyish.

"But I shall always wear curls," declared Goldie.

"You keep them cut off close, though. Why can't I have mine that way?"

"Because yours won't curl that way. You can't



imagine how Prim and I worked to make it curl at all."

"I wish you hadn't."

"And you would have looked like a fright. Rhoda, you haven't many winning ways, so you must depend upon curly hair."

The child looked puzzled.

There was a week's holiday, and it snowed all day Monday. There was a party nearly every night, and Primrose thought they ought to give one.

"Why, I think so, too," said their father.

But the sleighing answered very well, and they filled the week full up to Saturday, Chandler and Linn spent a good part of one day at the Brenners', the elder delighting in the curiosities, and Chan singing.

"We've decided on the eve of Washington's birthday for the party," announced their father. "Then you can have the next day to collect your scattered senses."

Primrose flew at him and gave him a tremendous hug and kissed him in the dimple.

"O dear!" Chandler sighed, "I wish we had a month's vacation. Those awful examples nearly kill me."

"I don't always get them right, but I have a good deal of fun, just the same," laughed the girl.



## CHAPTER V

### HOLIDAY AFFAIRS

LINN studied like a good fellow, for he was bound to enter the first division. That meant high school next summer. And he prodded up Rilla and Chan, though he did sometimes get impatient with his brother.

Amaryllis was doing very well with her music, and was fair in her other studies. Marigold was really bright. Sometimes she went over to visit the signor, who thought she had a truly promising voice and he let them sing duets. Prim was still "helter-skelter," her mother declared. Her composition on the grasshopper had been a great success, and now and then she broke out in some ridiculous verses.

Miss Greatorex's picture of "The Girl with a Violin" had been much admired. It copied the best points of Primrose, but the pose was most graceful and charming. She had received an offer for it, but she was going to put it in the Academy in the spring.



They went down one Saturday to see that and several other pictures.

"I'm glad the picture is better-looking than I am," Primrose said frankly. "For I *may* improve. There is plenty of room."

"It looks more like a German."

"And the Germans are musical," said Chan.  
"And the Italians."

"I'll bloom out into a genius some day. Just you wait and see."

"We'll wait, certainly."

Marigold told the story of the grasshopper.  
"And you can't—think! He looks just as if he were going to jump."

"What did you have for a guide?"

"Why, nothing. It just popped into my head and popped out. I can see such ridiculous things with my mind's eye. But I can't draw beautiful flowers, and my trees look as if there had been a cyclone. And as for the chairs and pots and pans and jugs—well you'd think I had tried to draw them with one eye shut, they are always lopsided."

Miss Greatorrex had laughed heartily over the commotion of the grasshopper, now she laughed again.

"And do you know anything about those beauti-



ful children with the odd names?" asked Amaryllis.

"Oh, Thetis and Mysa? Yes, they are still pretty, and their father is very proud of them. How are your twins?"

"Rhoda is a big, important girl. Laurel is a darling, and stays little. But she's lost most of her crooked words, and I think she will be the family beauty. There ought to be one out of five, and they have a Shetland poney and the prettiest cart! But Rhoda is ambitious to ride."

They talked about the concerts Howard Gwynne had given. Miss Greatorrex had been to one and was delighted.

"And the violins!" said Prim. "They set me crazy. If some one could give me ether or an opiate until I could get over the horrible squeakiness I'd learn to play. It makes Stuart mad."

"I think you could learn. But you may have some other genius."

"Especially drawing bugs and things."

Miss Greatorrex gave them the cosiest little tea. Then their father came after them, and did admire the painted girl very much. He wanted to say something, but he thought it rather ungracious to the daughter he loved so well. Prim, however, said it for him.





"I'M GLAD THE PICTURE IS BETTER-LOOKING THAN I AM,"  
PRIMROSE SAID, FRANKLY.—Page 67.







"You see it had to be rather better-looking, for it stands still, while I am always flying around and laughing and changing every moment, and no one can tell just how I *do* look. Mother said I was a homely baby, but I was good. So I may be a pretty old lady. I'm living in hopes. You have to be handsome once, I have heard."

"We had just a lovely time," Primrose declared when they reached home. "And the picture is going to be exhibited in the spring. Oh, Mother, you must go to see it. It almost made me believe I could play the violin."

"And so you could, Stuart says, if you would only set your mind to it," insisted Linn.

"I haven't enough mind for everything. There's where you make a mistake. Things slip through with a rush and are gone, and the others get caught somewhere and perish before they come to fruition. Now I think that quite a lucid speech."

Mr. Mann clapped his hands and the others followed.

The days were short, and Primrose was always astonished when Thursday came, for she thought it was only Wednesday. And Friday wasn't ever much good.

Linn hurried them along, for he wanted them



all to be promoted. He would really be ashamed if they were not. Amaryllis was doing very well, Marigold *was* ambitious, Prim didn't see any sense in language, and Amaryllis never cared whether words were relatives or not. And fractions floored both her and Chan. But Linn labored at them, if they did try his patience.

Then the papers came in. That of Amaryllis was good. Marigold's was fair. Prim just squeezed through.

"It was so lucky they gave me the questions that I knew. And I do hope I'll never forget those fractious examples."

"Fractious?"

"Well, that's what they are! They try your temper to the last degree, and I can't see a bit of sense in them. Now, countries are very fascinating. They make you feel as if you had traveled. And the animals suggest a menagerie—Bronx Park. And I *can* spell."

"And Josh Billings thought it took a smart man to spell words different ways."

"But that won't convince teachers and commissioners and all those wise heads who think children ought to know as much as grown people," rejoined Prim.

Chan failed utterly, though he was perfect in



deportment. Sometimes he had been marked inattentive in that.

"Oh, Chan! I'll give you up. And when I've taken so much pains with you!"

Linn had half a mind to cry, big boy as he was. He had his triumph and was proud enough of it. He would be sure to reach the high school in June.

"It's no use," declared Chan, in a ruffled tone. "There are things that I can't do. There are things that I can't learn. And what difference does it make to me if a man walks five miles one day, and six-tenths the next day, and four-eighteenths the next day, and gets to Boston on such a day. I'm not going to walk to Boston."

"There is no such sum, Chan. I don't see the sense of some of those things myself, but they get you in a habit of thinking concisely, and are a good practice for the studies farther on. Mr. Beers thought I was wonderful in that respect. He was awfully slow. Why, I could go all round him."

Chan was silent. He just hated figuring on those queer things.

"You are bright enough on music, and that really does stump me. Why, there are fractions again, thirds, and fifths, and half-notes, and time



and all that. It's because you don't pay any attention."

Chan didn't like it, and oh, he did love the music! It was always floating through his brain, forming wonderful combinations, tender, sweet, sad, rapturous. If he need not go to school any more.

Father was disappointed, he could see that, and he had a cry in the arms of Amaryllis, where he could always find comfort. She was better in some things than his mother. Well, it was a shame to have been three-quarters of the year without making any advance.

"You see, Father has set his heart on us all having a good education. I'm not quick like Linn or Goldie, and I do have to study hard. You see, he didn't have any chance when he was a little boy and had to get it all afterward. And I like to hear him talk to the men. Oh, we should be ashamed if he was like some of the men, or like those prosy Consadines who think nothing is of any account but their family tree, and they are not a bit interested in anything going on in the big world. And, Chan, I thought I couldn't do anything with music, but I did try very hard. Still it wasn't the thing I loved."

"Oh, you can do a great deal with a thing you



love. That's what most people can't understand. But how you can make yourself love a thing when you know you don't," and Chan smiled through some tears.

There was quite a change in the classes. Some new children came in to Chan's class, and as they were not up to a very high mark, his backwardness was not so evident. He *did* try, though. Now Linn let him quite alone, he was so engrossed with his own studies.

But the Monday afternoon lesson was his delight. Oh, what a beautiful world that of music was! Chan lived in a sort of rapture. All day Tuesday he seems to float in some exquisite atmosphere, and it was hard to come down to ordinary life. The lessons were an awful grind.

"Chandler, I don't know what to do with you," his teacher said.

Then his head began to ache, and there was a vague confusion where everything seemed to get mixed up. He went straight to his room on his return from school, but he often took up a volume of poems. He was enchanted with "Idyls of the King." How grand it was to be a poet! But he would rather be a fine musician. He was learning some Latin hymns with the signor, and they filled his soul with delight.



"I'd like to learn Latin," he said one day to Linn.

"You had better get a good record where you are, or some day you'll find yourself in a training-school for weak intellects," Linn returned with a short laugh.

Chan set at his desk one morning, puzzling over a rather intricate problem. Everything had dragged for the last few days. There had been a little company at the house of one of the pupils, and a play in which he had been coaxed to take a part, as it had a pretty song in it. The February day was warm, and the air had grown close, and seemed full of floating specks. It was about time for recess, and the children had been rather trying. Chan suddenly dropped his head on the boy next to him, who uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, Miss King, something has happened to Firth!"

She rang the bell and the scholars rose. The boy was holding his companion, and they gathered around him. Miss King came down.

"Oh," she cried, "he has fainted! I thought a while ago he looked very pale. Two of you boys carry him out in the hall."

There was a cane settee, and they laid him down.



She brought some smelling salts and bathed his face with cologne.

"Go ask Mr. Bradford to come here. Then all of you children go down in the court. Some one open the windows first."

Chan began to revive, and smiled faintly.

"What happened?" he asked in a tremulous tone.

"You fainted. It had grown rather close in the room, but it was recess time."

"Can you come down to the office and rest a while?" asked Mr. Bradford.

Chan tried to rise, but fell back again.

Miss King placed her arm about him and asked one of the teachers to get the aromatic ammonia, and gave him a little.

"I never fainted before," said Chan weakly.

"Well, take a little rest. I thought you looked tired and pale this morning. Chandler, I don't believe you have been very well of late."

"My head has felt queer and achy."

Presently Mr. Bradford took him downstairs. The class came back and resumed lessons, but he could not join them.

"I think you had better be dismissed for the day," the principal said kindly. "Who will take you home?"



"I'd like Amaryllis."

She came, much surprised at the mishap, as no one had fainted since Chan had fallen out of the tree at nutting time.

So they made ready. Chan still felt shaky, but the fresh air revived him somewhat. It was but a step to the trolley-cars, and after the ride he thought he felt well enough to walk home. But his mother was alarmed when she saw them come.

"I had a queer faint," explained Chan. "And Mr. Bradford thought I had better come home. I'm tired, and I don't want any lunch. I think I'll go to bed and get rested."

"I suppose I might as well go back to school," said Amaryllis. "This afternoon is quite important."

"Oh, yes," returned her mother. "I can care for Chan. Though I think he has not looked well since the night of the play."

The mother kissed him and went upstairs with him. He thought he would like some orange juice. When she returned, he was lying on the bed and did not look quite so wan, it seemed.

How pleasant and quiet it was in his pretty room! The confusion of the school had jarred on him for several days, and he had not felt quite well. But he had not been ill since he came from



the hospital. And, of course, he would soon be well again. It was so queer to faint when there was nothing the matter. Teacher said the room was close, but somehow he had felt shivery all the morning. Oh, none of them ever were ill.

He fell into a troubled sleep presently, though it was so sound that when his mother came and spoke to him he never stirred. When the children returned from school she would not allow them to go upstairs—the sleep would do him most good, she said.

Linn was quite exercised about the happening.

“Chan’s been kind of queer of late,” he confessed. “I think he was mortified about not passing, but he wouldn’t own it. I don’t believe he’ll make much of a real student, but he can read wonderfully, and there’s his lovely voice. But I *did* hate to have him lag so. And I *did* scold him.”

It was curious to see how they missed him, though he was never noisy. Mr. Mann went up and Chan talked a little, but dropped to sleep in the middle of a sentence.

“We’ll have the doctor to-morrow, Bessy. I’m afraid it is going to be a fever.”

“Oh, I hope not.”

“So do I. If it comes to that, I shall wish we had Mrs. Alden, though Mrs. Wilson is excellent.”



The mother went up and prepared him for bed. He kissed her and clung to her. "Oh, you won't go away, Mumsey?" he begged.

"No, dear."

But he was soon asleep again.

It was a restless and disturbed slumber. Two or three times she rose to listen. He muttered incoherently, but it was mostly about figures and journeys. Yet he did not appear to have much fever, although he did not want to get up in the morning.

Amaryllis came in for a few moments, but he seemed in no mood for talking. And to Linn he said, "I'm going to stay in bed and get good and rested."

Linn felt very serious over it. The younger children were all excitement. Tip thought he ought to stay at home in case anything happened.

"There is nothing to happen," said the mother. "He wants quiet and rest. He will soon be all right again."

But she was afraid in her inmost heart. Did prosperity make one feel less secure? Or was it because there was so much joy in living that one hated to have any break?

She went upstairs. Mr. Mann was sitting by the bed. Chan was in deep sleep, but now he was



marble-white and cool. Even his lips had no real color in them.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh," and her head sank down on her husband's shoulder.

"Bessy dear, we won't worry until the doctor has been here. Children are sometimes very ill, and get over it."

"He looked that way when he was hurt——"

"And he lived, you see," smiling, though he did not feel very light at heart.

There were no office patients, so Dr. Wardlaw started at once.

"Well," he began. "I've thought out of eight children I ought to have a chance, now and then. Is it the little one?"

"No, the middle boy."

"The one who sings?"

"Yes."

"We'll see." He dreaded a case of diphtheria. He looked a moment or two, felt the pulse, took the temperature. Chan started up rather wild and heavy-eyed.

"Oh, I must go to school!" he exclaimed. "Linn said——" but he fell back on the pillow.

His throat was all right. The fever did not seem at all alarming. But the whole frame was very much relaxed.



"I guess he's had rather too much school. He's tired out. You can't always tell how these low fevers are going, but I don't see anything serious at present. Just let him rest. He's better off in bed. I'll leave a fever remedy and be in again tomorrow. We will soon have him around, but no more school at present."

Mr. Mann was very much relieved, and went down to the city. Mrs. Mann brought her sewing and sat by her boy. Occasionally he started and muttered, but his mind seemed to run on figures, mostly.

It was noon when he asked for a drink, and then thought he would like to have something to eat, but he took only a few mouthfuls and said, "I'm so tired. It doesn't seem as if I could ever get rested."

"It has been only such a little while. I guess you have been tired longer than you thought. You have studied too hard."

"It's those awful problems! You see, the figures all run together in my mind. Now, in music the notes stay just there. I can see them. Mother, what is it when you can see things with your brain? It hasn't any eyes?"

"I don't know, dear. You see, when I was a growing girl they didn't teach all these wonderful



things, and I was always too busy with you children to learn them."

Chan dropped off to sleep again, and was more quiet. Oh, how still the house was. Cap sang in the lowest of tones.

"Seems almost as if there was a death in the house!" she said to herself. "And we just can't spare Chan. Well, there's no one—— Rhoda makes the most to-do, but she's awful smart at learning. She'll get clear ahead of Tip. But dear, sweet Chan! The Lord keep him safe. For, Lord, you don't often make such an angel for a boy!"

The children always rushed home to see what had happened. Chan's teacher was very sorry, and sent her love to him. They all wanted to go upstairs—why, it seemed at least a week since they had seen Chan.

"No," said their mother. "He sleeps a good deal, and the doctor wants him to be quiet. Go on with your lessons and play. Rilla, I think I wouldn't practise this afternoon."

Linn went to the sewing-room just at dusk. The children were in the library guessing riddles and inventing some.

"Mother," began Linn, "I'm awfully sorry I nagged so at Chan, and it all went for nothing. But I did hate to have him go on in the same class.



Maybe there's something different with him because he has that genius for music. But in school, you know, they have to go on just alike or they lose their marks. He won't ever make a real scholar, and maybe there isn't any use hammering at him. Rilla's slow, but she does learn, and she keeps it, too. Well, I suppose we can't all be smart," and the boy sighed.

"There is a great difference in children," said the mother. "I learned that years ago. It seems to me thy ought to be trained on the lines they are best fitted for, and when they are so little it is hard to decide."

"Only we know Chan is all for music. And if Mr. Gwynne makes a good deal of money at it, why shouldn't he when he gets to be a man?"

"Oh, Mother, you don't think——"

Linn leaned his face down on his mother's breast, and they both cried a little. Then they heard the cheerful voice downstairs.

"No, dear, no," hurriedly. Then they rose, and she made a light while the boy went up to his room. Oh, no, they couldn't spare Chan, he was so sweet and full of love; not the merry quips of Prim and Goldie, but bits of fun that were like little gleams of sunshine.

"The doctor thinks there won't be much change



in several days," Mr. Mann said cheerily, "but that we don't need to worry. Of course he will keep watch of him."

"Mommy," and Lal had her arms about her mother's neck, "why don't we send Chan to the hospital? He was cured all up and his hip made straight, and they'd make him well again, I know."

"Oh, I guess we can't spare him," was the reply.

They did miss him very much around the library-table. The younger children went to bed, the others crept in softly to say good-night, but Chan was asleep. Amaryllis had tears in her eyes, thinking of Eunice Williams.

This night Chan was very restless and had a higher fever, becoming positively delirious the next day. The doctor would not admit there was any real danger. Friends came to call, and were very sympathetic. Mrs. Brenner brought some choice hot-house fruit.

"If there is anything we can do for you," the lady said, "or if we can be of the slightest assistance, let us know at once. You are quite satisfied with Dr. Wardlaw?"

"It is one of the tedious cases. One day the fever is almost gone, and on the next it runs quite



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high again. There seems considerable stupor with it. We may look for a change soon."

"Oh, I hope it won't turn to typhoid."

"The doctor has found no symptoms yet."

"Well, count us among your most earnest friends."

"It's queer, Mother," said Linn, "but every one feels so interested and so earnest that he shall get well. I didn't think Grafton cared so much about any of us."



## CHAPTER VI

### COMING FROM THE QUEER COUNTRY

"MOTHER!" cried a soft, sweet voice with a different sound from that of the last ten days.

Mrs. Mann was sitting in her own room, just where she could look in at her boy. She was putting some trimming on Goldie's frock, and had not looked up for five minutes. Chan had his arms outstretched, and she sprang up.

"Why am I in bed in the middle of the day? The sun is shining. And where did you go?"

"I have not been away, dear."

"Why—it's very funny. I came home from school yesterday," said the boy, studying her face as he spoke.

"That was just a week ago. And you have been ill in bed ever since."

"Ill!" Chan had his arms about his mother's neck. "Why, I've been in such a queer world, trying all the time to get out of something. And there was a great wall of figures that I had to take down and build up, and I couldn't find



Linn to help. Where is he? Where are the children?"

"It is only two o'clock. They are all in school."

"O dear! Could I have some nice drink—that raspberry stuff? And I am hungry. And I'd like to sit in that big rocker."

"Wait until I come back. Don't try to get up, dear."

Cap was glad that he had really asked for something, and she sent his mother back while she toasted a piece of bread and poured out a glass of the raspberry shrub.

"I think I won't get up," began Chan. "I feel so sort of shaky. Will you put some pillows round me and sit here by me?"

"Yes," replied his mother, delighted to see him in his right mind. Yes, his eyes looked different. But, oh, how thin he was!

She fed him the toast in morsels, and he took sips out of the glass.

"A week?" he said. "I'd like to know where I was all the time! You're not making believe, Mother?"

"No. But I'm so glad now, so glad now."

He sank back on the pillow and was still a minute or two.

"Sit here and tell me all about it. There was



a great commotion at school. Was it an earthquake?"

"No. Only you fainted. Rilla brought you home. And you have been here in the bed ever since."

"Well, that's funny. I have been chasing round in the dark and not finding any one I cared about. And climbing out of queer places. And getting lost. And I'm so tired."

"Dear, don't talk any more now. When you are rested, you'll remember. Oh, I have my dear, dear Chan back," and she pressed him to her heart.

"Well—I couldn't have gone away," with a faint little laugh. "Do people always have those queer thoughts? Then they must go out of the body, if the body stays here in the bed."

"Yes, it is very strange."

"Did I sing any?"

"No. And I thought that rather curious."

"Well, all the time I was trying to. I could not hear it myself. I wanted to so much. And I did want to see the light. Oh, Mother, I pity the poor people who go blind after they have seen the light. If I never could have seen again! And if I never could sing again!"

He tried in a weak, wandering fashion to sing.



It brought tears to his mother's eyes, and yet it was very sweet.

He drew a long breath. "I guess I am all right. And, Mother, I wish you would sing me to sleep as you did when my hip was first hurt. Oh, Mother, I'm so glad to find you!"

She fixed his pillow and kissed him, and sang "Bonnie Doon," without the saddest lines. In a few minutes he was sleeping peacefully. The children came home and she went down to them and heard the day's doings and adventures.

"Isn't Chan ever going to get better?" asked Linn.

Would she dare say for a certainty?

"Oh, the doctor thinks—to-morrow——"

"If he only *can* get well!" rejoined Amaryllis.

Chan had a lovely restful nap, and when his father came home they two had a season of joy. But it was thought best not to have the others rouse the weak nerves and try them any further.

The doctor was much encouraged the next morning. Chan insisted on getting up and taking a few steps, but he felt quite as wobbly as when he had essayed it in the hospital. But he had come back to his right mind.

"He's been a pretty sick boy," admitted the doctor. "I thought two days ago it would surely



run into typhoid, and I doubt if we could have saved him if it had. And now there must be no more school all the spring. And I doubt if he ought to go on with his music. But his lungs are all right, and his throat is in good order. Oh, it might have been much worse."

When the children came home that day they heard Chan singing, and rushed upstairs in a crowd.

"Oh, Mother! Mother, oh, Chan!"

Was that pale little ghost Chandler Firth? He was pillowed up in bed, but the gladness in the soft brown eyes was inspiring.

"Oh, children, save a little of him, do! He is so weak yet. And you may bring back the fever. Don't all talk at once," pleaded the little mother.

"But we're so glad! Chan, we simply couldn't live without you! It's been the awfulest time!" cried Prim. "And now you will get well again, but it seems as if it would take a good deal of padding to fill you out. And nearly every one has been here. Can you recall the fact that at first they felt eight children would disgrace the neighborhood! Well, it is funny how people veer round. And it takes all sorts to make the world. The old lady was glad she didn't belong to the 'sorts,' and I'm glad I do. They're so sociable-like, and inter-



ested in you, and you find ever so many things to like in them. And some of them are so funny. If I couldn't have some fun I shouldn't want to live."

"Oh, Primrose, you haven't changed a bit!" and Chan laughed.

"No, why should I change? I like myself very well, and you know you all like me——"

"Primrose, will you please go downstairs," said her mother, in her most authoritative voice.

She snatched a kiss from Chan that left him helpless on the pillow, then she and Goldie executed a dance for Cap in the kitchen.

"I never knew what a *pas seul* was before, but it seemed as if it must belong to euchre. I said so once, and Abe he laughed and laughed, and I said, 'Don't be a fool! You're near enough one now.'"

"Oh, Cap! doesn't he ever get mad at you?" asked Goldie.

"Well, he can put five cents in the missionary box and get pleased again. And this is just beautiful about Chan. For when a fever once gets turned wrong side out they do get well. Then fever don't often run more'n ten days."

They never had a merrier time in the little old Red House than they had that evening, though



Mr. Mann thought they ought to go out in the carriage-house to jubilate.

Chan laughed a little, and wished he were there with them.

"We ought to give a big party," exclaimed Linn. "We've never had a grand time in this new house with lots of folks."

Mr. Mann had proposed a Christmas party, but there had been too many invitations out.

Chan found it was going to take quite a while to get over his excursion into the unknown. He was very weak. It didn't seem as if one could lose so much strength in such a little while. The first time he walked across his room he almost stumbled over, and it seemed quite an achievement when he went through to the sewing-room. But he was allowed to have some visitors up in his pretty room—not too many at a time.

March had come in with sleet and snow before he went downstairs, then it cleared up warm and his father bundled him up and took him out to the merry jingle of the bells. His little boy! His heart was one big thanksgiving. He loved them all, but this one was dearer, somehow, perhaps because he had come so near to losing him, for he was sure Chan had been worse than Dr. Wardlaw admitted.



But Chan did not grow fat or rosy as he had done at the hospital. Then he had not been really ill. Mr. Mann laughingly declared he would have to take him back there.

The signor had been over to see him, but advised a little carefulness about his voice.

"Oh, it doesn't strain it a bit to sing," he protested.

They had not written to Mr. Gwynne until he was comparatively well. Chan had the pleasure of inditing the letter. The signor had written also, and said that Chan was thin and pale, though he was his own winsome self, and his voice had not suffered by the fever.

So when Mr. Gwynne returned, he almost flew up to Grafton, and they welcomed him with open arms. It was quite the last of the month, and there were certain indications of spring.

"Oh, Chan, my dear boy, you must have been very ill!" he said. "Why, you are a shadow now."

"It wasn't very bad, only that one week when I didn't know where I was—where I went to that queer country where it was dark and the sun never shone. And the people were so queer with their strange bodies you could almost see through. Where do you suppose it was?"



Howard Gwynne shivered. Had the boy come so near the confines of the other world?

"No, it wasn't quite delirium," Mrs. Mann said when he questioned her. "It really seemed as if he were one of the souls in prison and could not find a way out. But I think Dr. Wardlaw staved off the worst. Chan never appeared quite as robust as Linn, or as wiry as Tip. I do believe he is all over it. But he is not going to school this spring. I think the studies are too severe, and Linn was trying too hard to push him ahead. He has never been promoted yet."

Mr. Gwynne was very glad she did not blame the music lessons with the signor. He knew he could trust the signor not to crowd the promising voice. And it seemed sweeter than ever.

"I think I will take him down to Dr. Richards," Mr. Gwynne said. "Richards is a splendid surgeon and doesn't do much in the way of medicine, but I'd trust him with any one's life. There may be a little trouble somewhere."

Chan was delighted to go down to the hospital. His father had taken him to the factory once, and they had had a little run about. But Chan never tired of staying at home. There were his beautiful books, there was his dear mother to talk to, and there were those sweet, naughty improvisations on



the piano that the signor discouraged. Sometimes he meant to write them out. And Dan insisted that he should go driving with him, Rhoda was growing very expert with the little Shetland.

Chan wanted to hear all about the cornet-players who had been left in Chicago. No one had tired of the birds, but there were some other beautiful things as well.

They went to the hospital, and Dr. Richards was ready to receive them. He shook hands warmly with Mr. Gwynne, then took both of Chan's and studied his pale face.

"What have you been doing to him?" he queried.

"I have only just returned. He had been pretty ill, I think."

"No, it wasn't very bad," said Chan. "It was a little fever first, when I was in a curious country where it was dark all the time and there were such lots of figures piling up."

"Are you sure they were not notes?"

"Oh, I should have liked them then and known their names and we'd have sung. You see, I was trying to get through and be promoted. I'd been in one class so long that Linn was ashamed of me. He was good to show me, and patient most of the time. I'm a regular dumbhead for figures. I can't



make myself care for anything but music. That fills me all up. It's always singing inside of me. If they could set problems to music, oh, that would be fine."

Dr. Richards laughed. "And did the pile of figures disappear?"

"Oh, yes, when I began to go out into Mother's room. She is the sweetest mother in the world. And I was all right except shaky in the legs. Father carried me up and down stairs at first."

Chan laughed with such a soft, musical sound that his listeners glanced at each other.

"Doctor, I want you to examine him thoroughly," said Mr. Gwynne. "Heart and lungs, brain and nerves. The children are all sound and healthy, and their mother looks like a girl, although she has done the work of any two women. But I want to be sure about him, and how much he will stand. My heart is quite set upon him."

They went into the little office. Mr. Gwynne heard them laugh, but now and then Chan said, "Ouch!" When they came out, Chan was flushed but laughing.

"Your boy is sound as a nut, Gwynne, with a throat made to order. And every organ is in good shape. He is not quite up to the mark. I think they have made him study too hard with the



things he doesn't understand. He wants a good rest to bring him up. See here. One of our fine nurses has had a giving-out time, and she is going over to England and Scotland for a three-months' change. Chan, you remember nurse Jane and that pathetic little Collamore boy?"

"Oh, yes," Chan replied in a tone of delight.

"Why, I'm going myself," interrupted Mr. Gwynne.

"Well, the boy needs a companion and you will be full of business. A sea-voyage will be just the thing. And Jane grew very fond of him. Yes, you couldn't do a better thing. I'll summon Jane."

She was delighted to see Chan, but exclaimed at the change in him. She was thin herself, and the freshness had gone out of her complexion, but the bright, tender manner remained.

"When had you planned to go?" Mr. Gwynne asked almost abruptly.

"About the middle of April, though I have not engaged my passage," she replied.

"Make it May if you can, and consider it an engagement. I shall not be a hard master. But I want the best motherly care taken of the boy so he won't get homesick. Will you like to go, Chan?"

Chan looked from one to the other and drew a



long breath. "There's Mother and Father," he said.

"No one would stand in the way of an opportunity like that," exclaimed the doctor. "It will be just exactly what you need. New scenes, pleasant companionship, and the best of care; variety, and no studying. After all, it is only for a little while. You won't have any time to miss the home folks. And think—you did enjoy the hospital. You never worried the nurses, nor found fault."

"There was nothing to find fault about. It was all delightful, only the plaster-cast pinched at first and I couldn't turn over. Why, there are lots of children going abroad smaller than I am," said Chan, laughing.

Mr. Gwynne had taken Jane over by the window to explain what would be needed. She promised to take the best care of the boy, and to be especially careful when Mr. Gwynne was away, as he should go to Germany and no doubt to Paris. When it was possible, he would take them both, but he should want her to write at least every other day. And she must let Chan talk about the home folks, as it would be the best antidote for the longing for them. He was very fond of them all, and of his mother."

Jane remembered the day that Chan's mother



came, and how she knelt by the little cot, and that for a time neither could speak. "Oh, yes," she said, "we shall be real old friends, and I am more than glad you asked me to go. I wondered how I'd stand three months without any little thing to cuddle, for the doctor said I must let hospitals alone, mostly. I'd had enough of suffering at home. And there's something about Chan—isn't he different from most children?"

"I guess it's the overflowing love of his mother. And that stepfather is a man out of a thousand. But I do think Chan is just a little different."

"And his lovely voice! We heard that he sang in the city on Christmas eve."

"Yes," and Mr. Gwynne's face was for the instant illumined. "And the voice is what I want you to be careful about. You know, such a voice is a rare possession. When I get my plans more matured, I shall want to see you. Shall I find you here?"

"Oh, yes, and I am coming back here. It will always be home to me. Oh, Mr. Gwynne, I am so glad of your offer!"

So they shook hands cordially. Chandler was all smiles now, and there was a little color in his cheeks.

They had some luncheon and then went to the



factory, where Mr. Mann had just finished giving instructions about several orders.

"Well, Chan," he exclaimed, "did the doctor use some charm? You look more like yourself."

"He saw the nurse who was so good to him," said Mr. Gwynne, replying for the boy. "And he is well and sound, only he hasn't regained all his strength. But there is a grand medicine prescribed for it, with this nurse Jane as a caretaker, a sea-voyage!"

"Not to—not abroad?"

"Yes." Mr. Gwynne plunged into the matter at once and set it in its most fascinating light. Mr. Mann went back to a certain note, before he had seen this person who expressed such a warm interest in the little lad and was desirous of befriending him. And he was then glad the man was out in Russia, and hoped he would forget all about the boy. And here he was, asking for a share in him, perhaps some day to take all!

"I must think about it," he said slowly. "And there is his mother."

"And you are going to have seven left. And it will be only about three months. I shall come up with you to-night and we'll talk it all over. You will see it is for his benefit physically, and he will come home a new boy. He will have a chance



to hear some fine music as well. And now, if you will excuse me, I will go about a little business. I'll meet you at the train."

Mr. Mann nodded.

For some moments neither the boy nor the man spoke. Then Chan came over and put his arms around his father's neck.

"You don't want me to go!" he said in a tone barely above a whisper.

"Chan, my dear lad, I prayed you might not die when there was no real danger, and you were spared to us. I don't know just how much a man loves his own sons, but if he loves them any better than I love you it would be hard even to let them go to heaven. I've said a hundred times to myself that you were my little boy and couldn't belong to any one else. I'm afraid I've always been just a mite jealous of Howard Gwynne because he could do so much for you. Suppose your mother had felt that way and refused me?"

"Oh, she couldn't. She would have given me to you if you hadn't wanted any of the others. And she loved me very much, too."

"I should have her and seven others, and they're all worth having. And it's a lovely opportunity for you. No, I don't want you to go away even for three months. If you hadn't been ill, and I hadn't



sat by your bed and felt how hard it would be to give you up, I should not have known. But I think it would be selfish to refuse, and Mr. Gwynne might think we would be too interfering, and lose interest in you. Chan, dear, in a way it is going to bring about a sort of separation. You must belong partly to him, and if all goes well he will put you in the front rank, for he knows what to do with such a voice. I couldn't do it. And though it brings a pang, I suppose I shall consent to this little thing, and then to some greater thing, until you will be with him most of the time. All these thoughts ran through my mind as he talked. I can see how it will be."

"Oh, but I shall *always* belong to you. If you had not brought me to the hospital I should not have seen Mr. Gwynne. So it is you who gave me the friend, the lovely home that we all share, and the nice life for Mother. Oh, I couldn't be ungrateful."

"I hoped I should study out what would be best for all you children. But I never thought of you coming first. It is such a splendid chance. Someone who knows just what to do with your voice, and who I think will not exploit it for pure selfish gain. If he were not the man he is I could not give you up."



Chan was crying.

"There, dear, I wanted you to know just how I felt. You will understand it better as the years go on. And I think you will always love me. I am quite sure of that."

"Oh, I shall, I shall," replied Chan with a convulsive sob. "Prim says you are the best and dearest father any children ever had, and I think so, too."

"Well, dear, now I'll sketch out a few business letters and then we'll take a ride up to the Park to see how much of spring has come there. It will help to settle our minds for this evening's talk."

Chan went over to the window. It was not a very light one, being pretty close to the next building. Everything seemed strange to him. He was to cross the ocean! What if there should be a wreck! Oh, had he better go? Two months in the hospital had seemed a long time to be away from his mother. And they would be thinking of him. But they would have many other things to think of. They were interested in school. And there was the dainty little Shetland, and Bonnie that Tip was riding, and Lady Betty that Prim could manage with skill. And Mother would have his father, who was so dear and tender.



## CHAPTER VII

### FROM THE OTHER SIDE

THE Park was suggesting spring. There were crocuses, and in sheltered places pansies and some tulips, and oh, the pussy willows and red maples. And there were boys playing ball. The green-houses were a sight. Children were out in throngs, for it had been a pleasant day. And the birds and squirrels! Yes, it was truly spring!

Mr. Gwynne was looking out for them, and they had just time to make the train. The two men read their papers—it was too noisy to talk. Chan was thinking. Oh, what would Mother say!

They had a warm welcome. The house was sweet with English violets sent by Mrs. Brenner, who wanted Chan and Linn to come to tea the next day to see some fine pictures and curiosities that the Moors had left in Spain. That had set them to talking about the Moors.

But what had Dr. Richards said about Chan. “Oh, that he was all right.”

“He pinched me and pulled me and knocked



me, and made me breathe this way and that, and double myself up until I felt that I must be made of India rubber. And he said I stood it tiptop, but I must have a good long vacation to get some fat on my bones. And Father and I went to the Park in the afternoon."

"Were there any ball-players out?" asked Linn.

"Two teams. But we went over to the green-houses."

"Well, you don't know anything about playing. You are not the normal boy, Chan."

"No," said Chan meekly with an upturned glance that made Mr. Gwynne smile.

"Now, I don't know whether you are laughing at Chan or baseball," declared Primrose.

They adjourned to the library while the younger students settled to the play-room and their tables. Then Mr. Gwynne unfolded the plan that had so suddenly sprung into existence—that Chan should take a sea-voyage and a journey of three months abroad.

"Oh, he couldn't!" exclaimed Mrs. Mann. "He is too young. And you don't know the bother of a child."

"But he is going to have the finest nurse! Chan, tell them about Miss Jane," said the father.

"She's going for three months to recruit. She



looks quite as thin as I do, and her pretty pink cheeks are gone. And she was so glad, Mother. She cried a little when Mr. Gwynne told her how ill I had been. And she hugged me up so. She said she hadn't really cared to go, only it was best, but with me to look after she'd have just a lovely time."

Chan's face was so eager it blossomed.

"But you couldn't go and leave us all!" interposed his mother with an hysterical catch in her breath.

"Why, it's just splendid!" cried Linn with a boy's heartiness. "You can snap your fingers at fractions, and that wonderful and abominable system of journeys that rack your brains and tear your heart-strings, and you never get anywhere, just to step into a big steamer and glide over the mighty ocean and see lots of people and strange countries, as Lord Lovel did. Chan, you seem to be born for good luck. If I were Prim I'd get up and dance all 'round the 'goodlie companie,' quotation."

"Well, dance," cried Goldie. "We'd all like to see you."

There was a general laugh, and it broke the tense strain. Mr. Gwynne seized the opportunity to expatiate on the advantages the journey would be



to Chan, and that at present he was not in a condition to be poring over books or worrying his brains with abstruse problems. Then he should look after them and plan out journeys and stopping-places, and Chan would learn a great deal more than at school."

They were all against her, she saw. But she cried with a mother's tenderness.

"Oh, Chan, you wouldn't go?"

And once she had resolved to give him away! Yet that was so different.

Mr. Mann drew him down on his knee.

"We must think what will be best for Chandler in the future in the way of health and improvement," he said. "The like doesn't happen to a boy once in a hundred times. And it will be only three months. We might have to send him away to some seaside place later in the summer. It is very kind in you, Mr. Gwynne, to take so much interest, and we know we can rely upon you."

"Thank you," said the visitor with deep feeling.

That night, as they were retiring, Bessy clasped her arms about her husband's neck, and cried with unwonted impetuosity—"Oh, how could you! How could you! Do you realize that you are giving Chan away!"

"No," he said, "we shall bind him with stronger



cords of love, I think. It was a great struggle. But you see Chan is all music. He falls behind in his studies. Linn declares he will never make any kind of a scholar. He has no interest in any branch he does not love. When he grows older and mingles with the world he will see the necessity of some things. If he was not a musical genius I should not yield so easily. Mr. Gwynne is a fine man with clear judgment and strong, high principles, and this is why I am willing to trust Chan to him. I can send Linn to college presently, money can do that, but I could not put Chan in the forefront of music. And half-way measures might prevent a success. So, dear, we must not interfere with that. If you have hatched a lark in a sparrow's nest, we must not clip his wings. It has been a real struggle with me, for I did not know you could love any child like that," and he ended with a tremulous sound in his voice.

"Oh, husband!" But her tone told him she understood.

Mr. Gwynne talked a little to her the next morning, but she assented quietly, though she was not really enthusiastic. He said he would send up Miss Jane, who had a great longing to see them all together.

Linn told the news at school, for he was very



glad to exploit Chan after his low school record. And Grafton was really proud of her little hero. Calls of congratulations came, and none were more heartfelt than the Bradleys'.

But Mrs. Brenner came, followed by her coachman with a great bundle. There was a fine steamer rug and a soft, beautiful lounging-robe that Chan said was fit for a king.

"We wanted to be in among the first. Mr. Brenner is just delighted. And Howard Gwynne stands high as to moral character. If I had a boy with a voice I should put him in his hands. Oh, Mrs. Mann, you are to be congratulated. And the sea-trip will be such an excellent thing for him. We are going over presently to Algiers first, then over to Athens and up through Germany. I'm going to give you an address, Chan, and you must send a card now and then to let us know where you are. You'll have a lovely time, I know, and get well and rosy."

The rest of the household could hardly pay attention to school duties. Miss Jane came up and they all fell in love with her. She listened very sweetly to the many charges of the mother, smiling a little to herself. But what a merry crew they were! And what a happy home! Surely the stepfather was an exceptional man, but he did enjoy



them all wonderfully. Linn insisted on taking her to the little old house, and she thought it very pretty now with its promise of fruit and flowers. And the story of how Mr. Mann had come to them was really very funny as well as charming.

"And he's just splendid!" continued the boy enthusiastically. "We are not the only ones that he loves so, but there are some very poor children, too. He gave the orphans a trolley-ride last summer, a regular all-day picnic."

"And he sent two little boys to the hospital before Chan. One had both legs so crushed by a heavy dray that, though they tried hard to save one, they could not, and it was best for the poor little boy to die. But Mr. Mann wanted him to have some nice care and end his life happily. The other one recovered, and we found a good place in the country for him. He is so fond of making children happy," said Miss Jane.

"That's because he wasn't very happy himself and had no own mother."

"Sometimes it makes people hard and selfish, but it has filled him with a tender kind of pity. And he's so merry. Oh, I don't wonder you all love him. If there were more of such people in the world it would be delightful, like heaven."

"And Mr. Gwynne is nice, too. There's the



loveliest story about our piano. Do you like real stories?"

"Indeed I do."

"Well, you know about Chan's singing to little Arthur? Chan and Goldie used to imitate the birds. There wasn't much singing at Denby; few people *could* sing, I guess. And Mr. Gwynne wrote it out and set it to music. He is what they call a composer."

"Yes, I've heard about the beautiful cornet selection called 'The Birds.'"

Then Linn told about the letter they had heralding the trunk, and how mystified they were, and how Mr. Gwynne insisted that Chan and Goldie had a share in the money it had made, so he used it for that beautiful piano."

"Oh, that is a really wonderful story. But some simple songs have made a good deal of money. And some men, I think, would have set Chan to singing at once and made money with him. Two different churches made a bid for him."

Linn opened his eyes very wide. "He's all music," he returned. "But when it comes to figures and problems, and a bit about science, O dear!" and Linn laughed heartily.

"You can't have a genius for everything," said Miss Jane sagely.



She was very glad of the ride about forlorn Denby, and she and Chan talked it over on their travels. And Linn's little store experience pleased her very much. They were sorry she could stay only two days, but Mr. Gwynne wanted her for some arrangements.

Oh, how the days flew! Chan's heart was almost broken at the thought of the separation, and yet he couldn't help being wildly happy. It wasn't like going anywhere alone, and little boys went to boarding-school where all was strange, and to conservatories in Germany, where they had some severe masters. And he was coming back!

Quite a party would go down to see him off, the Brenners, and the Bradleys, and several others, and all the older children. Mrs. Mann simply couldn't.

"And I'm not going," Amaryllis said to Mr. Evans. "You see it wouldn't do to leave Mother alone, and I seem to be the nearest. She'll need some comforting. She's quite resigned now. It was so good that Miss Jane came up. And Linn and the girls are just crazy to go on board the big vessel."

Her voice was so sweet with a hopeful sound in it. "She is always thinking of others," Mr. Evans said to himself. And the girl's face was taking



on a kind of spiritual beauty that made her look more like Chan. And she had such lovely brown eyes.

Another incident served to break the tenseness of the situation. Miss Greatorox had written Primrose a letter. "The Violin Girl" had been hung at the Academy, and very cordially spoken of. Then a German had come in one day, a fair, light-haired, middle-aged man, who stood before it a long while. Then he came the next day and the next, and hunted up Miss Greatorox. Would she sell the picture?

He had four boys, three grown to manhood. There had been one sweet, pretty girl with just such hair and eyes, and she had played the violin. She had died after a very brief illness, and they had nothing but a baby portrait of her. He had tried to have something painted, but no one could catch that bright, eager look. Was this a real girl? His little Gretchen had just such long braids of hair. He would give her her price without any demur, but he would like to see the American girl.

So the meeting was arranged for Saturday afternoon. The vessel was going out at two, so there would be good time.

"The idea of my looking like a German girl!"



laughed Prim. "It's funny, but we all do look different, and Laurel will be the family beauty."

"Laurel isn't as pretty as Chan," declared Rhoda.

"Well, we ought to be able to be told apart."

"And if I didn't have red hair I might set up a claim for beauty," said Marigold. "And if I had a dimple in my cheek," she added with a tremendous sigh.

And so it happened that the procession started off in quite joyous spirits.

"Well, they're a lot to be proud of," exclaimed Cap. "And when they're grown up, the twins will be coming on, an' I declare, Mrs. Mann, there'll be enough to last your lifetime. You won't have to 'dopt any."

Amaryllis clasped her arms about her mother, whose head sank down on her shoulder. A curious sense of protection stirred within her, and she suddenly realized that she had grown tall, that she was a little girl no longer.

Of course they both cried. Mrs. Mann had borne up very well, but there had been so much excitement.

"Mother dear," said the tender voice, "it's only until August at the latest. And think how rapidly last summer passed! And all the beautiful places



and churches, and perhaps palaces, Chan will see! And Mr. Gwynne said there would be the oratorio of the 'Messiah' in London, with a great singer for the solo part. And he will write us so many splendid letters."

"It is the first break," said the mother.

"But he was at the hospital, you know."

"Oh, yes, but this is different."

"Still, you have all the rest of us."

There was no reply to this. Amaryllis dusted, then followed her mother upstairs. The rooms were soon in order. Rhoda proposed going out with the pony. Amy Boyce came over to have a good swing. Mrs. Mann brought out the girls' gingham dresses that she had started. The girls were Prim and Goldie, always. Amaryllis felt that she was the odd one, she was so much older.

There was luncheon, a very quiet meal, and Saturday was always noisy. Rilla inquired if her mother did not want to take a drive.

Her mother would rather sew.

Mrs. Boyce came in presently with some embroidery, and they went out on the porch.

The winter's school had been a decided success for Laurel, though, oddly enough, she would not exploit any of her attainments to Rhoda. Mrs. Boyce enjoyed it as much as the children. Then



Mrs. Greer joined them, saying that she felt lonesome, and Mr. Greer was staying in the city for the famous ball-game.

And so the day wore away. Cap began to prepare the dinner. "Though I dare say they'll stuff a lot of things in the city," she complained.

"Children can always eat," said Mrs. Mann.

It was late when they came, and they kissed their mother as if they had not seen her for a week.

"Well, it's been just splendid! And the man who said 'floating palace' just hit it. It's as fine as anybody's house, and so big you almost think you must be walking every step of the way. Chan is to share Jane's stateroom; it has two berths. And the steamer looked so grand as she started out in the bay——"

"That I wished I was going," interposed Linn. "Well, I shall some day."

"And you went to the Academy?" said Rilla.

"Oh, Rill, the nicest, funniest time." Prim seized her opportunity. "Well, some of the pictures were beautiful and some I didn't care for. Miss Greatorex had a little landscape with a moon lighting it up. And the man we saw in the summer had three pictures all in yellowish lights. They were queer. But the violin girl was fine. Why, she looked as if she had played to the end



of the time and was just going to step off. It's queer how any one can express so much."

"That's the genius of it," declared Linn.

"She doesn't resemble me very much, only in the attitude and the hair. Is my hair as beautiful as that? Not yellow nor golden, but something mysterious—sunshiny, and braided to perfection. Mrs. Bradley said Miss Greatorex could paint hair, and she can."

"Oh, do get along to your man!" cried Goldie impatiently.

"Well, he was quite a long while in coming; that's the reason I go slowly. A big, fair, rather florid German, with a dimple in one cheek not half as deep as father's, and talks rather broken, and, oh, what blue eyes! He came right over to me and lifted one of my braids, and said, 'This is the girl with German hair. It is like my Gretchen's. We had it cut off, her two beautiful braids, and it is in a case. But Gretchen was—well, more like the picture, and that is not quite like you,' and he shook his head."

"'No,' said Miss Greatorex. 'I did not mean it to be a likeness of Miss Firth.'

"'You would do for a sister. If you had no home or folks I would like to take you to Germany. She always stood that way. German girls are



solid, square-like, but she wasn't. That and the hair made me buy the picture, and her mother will be very glad and happy over it. You play? There is music in your face.'

"I had to say 'Not yet,' but I didn't enlarge upon my finely attuned nerves, and he said she played when she was four years old. So you see she must have been a genius. And he thought we were all the family, but we told him we had an older sister and Chan, but we never said a word about the twins and Tip. Eight does seem so many!"

"But Germans believe in large families."

"I don't suppose it would have put him in a temper," laughed Prim. "I wanted to hear about his home and the family. They live twenty miles from Berlin and have quite a farm. The oldest son is secretary to some one; the next is studying forestry, and the other is in school. And Berlin must be beautiful with all its palaces and the grand Emperor. Oh, I hope Chan will get to Berlin."

"Are you ever coming to dinner?" asked Cap rather impatiently.

So they made ready, but their refreshments in between had rather impaired their appetite, and there was still so much to say about the Hoff-



meysers that it was some time before they could get back to Chan.

"And he isn't a bit afraid," declared Linn. "I hope he won't be seasick, but I suppose Miss Jane knows just what to do. Is he out of sight of land by this time?"

"Oh, yes," said his father.

"How strange it must make one feel."

"But you hardly notice the motion of those big vessels in calm weather."

They were all rather tired, and went to bed quite early. But the mother thought of her boy and counted the days and nights before he would be safe on land. How many times Mr. Gwynne had gone back and forth and nothing had happened!

Sunday was a beautiful day. They had to talk about Chan as they came out of church, and the children at Sunday school were warmly interested. Mr. Evans came to tea, and was so delightful that Mrs. Mann quite took heart again. It really was the event of Grafton.

Chan had said to his brother:

"I'd like you to go into my room and read and study, only don't let Tip tumble my books over. I'll think about your being there, but you won't have a dumb little fellow to coach and to scold."



"And I wasn't always patient. You must forgive me, Chan," very earnestly.

"I guess I was enough to try the patience of a saint, as Cap says. Mr. Gwynne thinks I won't have much call for those things. And you'll go to college. I'm glad you can learn them easily."

"But I study like a Trojan. I'm bound to get into the high school."

The children talked a good deal about the Hoffmeyers and the portrait. Prim declared it put her quite in conceit of herself, yellow hair and all.

"It's better than red."

"Yours grows darker. And it does curl so beautifully."

Then there flashed a cablegram. They were just getting in, and all was well.

But Chan's letter was the greatest delight. It was written at intervals. For two days he had felt rather shaky. Miss Jane had one real sick day and night, then they were both ravenous. Food had never tasted so good, but Nurse Jane was careful, and he felt very, very well, and could sing like a lark. The passengers were so kind and friendly, and they wore such lovely clothes. He thought of the little boy in the hospital whose



mother was dead, and who was going to London with his father. He would like to find him.

And they must tell him all about home and how they were getting along, and what folks said. There was a separate enclosure for his mother and one for his father, and she read hers over and over. Oh, he never would forget her.

But the man who loved him so much missed the arms about his neck, the soft cheek against his, the dear sweet voice. "I shall always be your little boy, no one will win me away from you, and when I am a man and famous I shall still be yours."

Oh, what a wonderful thing love was!

So they worked and studied and played, and now and then disputed, and found so much to do that they could hardly put it all in. Mrs. Mann took Laurel to Oaklands with her to make a little visit, and found the Burnhams very happy and useful in their new parish. Denby had at last called a minister, an elderly man who had a small income of his own and did not want to work very arduously. He was a widower, and at once there was a sudden interest. They fixed up the parsonage and had the garden put in shape, and then were surprised by the advent of a son in consumption, a daughter-in-law who would be house-



keeper, and two children. They had a feeling they had been rather outgeneraled.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Mann took a little journey as far as Buffalo, and spent a day at Niagara. Laurel stayed with Mrs. Boyce. Cap was the head of the household, and all went well.

But the letters from abroad were treasures. Chan had been to see so many of the beautiful things, and to a service in Westminster Abbey, and to two splendid concerts. He and Nurse Jane had a charming home in the suburbs, and came and went through a tunnel, except when they stayed all night with Mr. Gwynne at his hotel. And Chan had taken some lessons with a musician who pronounced his voice very promising. And now he was going to Scotland with Miss Jane, while Mr. Gwynne took a run over to Paris on some business matters.

After another little stop in London they were going to Germany, where the two cornetists were to meet him, and there were to be concerts in different places.

"Well, Chan is certainly having the time of his life while we are pegging away at the tree of knowledge trying to gather the needed fruit for examination. I'm pretty sure of my standing. And, Rilla, you *will* get into the graduating class."



"I think I will give up music lessons for a while and just practice what I have learned. Then I shall have an extra hour every day. Oh, I shall be glad when vacation comes."

Miss Raynor thought it a pity when she was doing so well.

"Then I'll take a double share in the summer." Goldie thought she would like to begin, so she would take the vacant place. And there was gardening that suddenly stirred Prim's ambition. Women were florists. She and Chan had planned for it once, but now Chan couldn't afford to soil his hands.

"For you see," said Prim with forceful seriousness, "we're going to be men and women some day, and we oughtn't to be a continual burden on the best father in the world."

"We might get married," interposed Goldie.

"I'd like to take a try for myself. I shall never be a famous violinist nor much of a singer. Stuart was awfully mad the other day and said I didn't try. At times I do things to avoid the squeaks. I can't get to admiring them, and sometimes they make such ridiculous figures in my brain that I have to laugh. I really don't want Stuart to spend his time over me. And there's that wonderful Mr. Burbank in California! If I



were a boy I'd go and hire myself out to him and learn to make all manner of strange things grow."

"But gardening *is* messy after all. When you are grown up and want your hands nice——" and Goldie looked thoughtfully into the distance. "I'd like the greenhouse and all the strange lovely things that come from every quarter of the globe. And if you had that you'd have plenty of workmen. And if Chan should lose his voice he could come——"

"Mr Gwynne won't let him," protested Prim. "He knows just what to do."

"I know what I shall be," interposed Rhoda.

"Well, what?" Prim sank down on the grass, and began to hug her knees with an air of profound attention.

"I'm going to be a college president."

"Oh, my!" Prim nearly rocked over in her astonishment.

"Well," began Rhoda, in no way abashed, "there'll be colleges all the time and they'll want presidents. I'll go through the high school and enter college and study everything, and then teach. Teacher was reading about a little girl who was in an orphan asylum, and so smart they made her a monitor and then assistant. And she went to



college and was very, very smart, and I'll have to go somewhere next year——”

“For, like the little Dutch boy, you will ‘teach de teacher all he knew’ and be discharged.”

“Well, you can laugh. Miss Raynor says I am the smartest one in the school, and she wishes they were all like me. And I know Father will send me to college.”

“You and Linn will be the corner-stones of the family greatness. But there's nothing like aiming high and hitching your wagon to a star. I wish you all success, Rhoda. I'd like to pick out my star. I think it must be one of those queer revolving things that surprise this mundane sphere once in a hundred years.”

Rhoda walked off in a very dignified manner.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### VISIONS OF DELIGHT

CHAN was having such a splendid time that he said he couldn't begin to write it all, but would keep some to tell when he came home. His references to his return comforted his mother very much. London was so big and queer, so full of houses and palaces and shops and people. The Thames Embankment was wonderful, and there were tunnels to go everywhere. He had been in the houses of Parliament, and the peers were mostly old men and sleepy-looking. He had seen the royal family in carriages, and they looked like other folks, but the horses were splendid! Linn would like it all so much. There were things he did not care about—they did not appeal to a little boy—but two concerts set him nearly wild.

Then Mr. Gwynne packed them off to Scotland.

“He's had rather too much excitement, and you must keep him quiet and let him sleep all he can. Go to some nice seaside place, and you might try baths for him. Oh, you can watch him



like a doctor, I know," he smilingly said to Jane.

It was a pretty sheltered sort of place just a little distance from a fishing-town. Chan *was* tired. Nurse Jane kept him on the lounge a good deal and read to him, and they talked over hospital days, and he told her about last summer and the wonderful summer with its special days of pleasure. They drove about with a shrewd, rough-coated pony, and the towns were so queer and small and hemmed in by hills. Then the inhabitants had such a funny language—Chan couldn't understand it. And the bagpipes were horrible to him.

He did improve greatly. The tired look went out of his eyes and the pink came back to his cheeks. They had a very nice time with Jane's relatives, though they were mostly elderly people. They were charmed with his singing, and now he wanted to sing all the time. Aunt Ailsie taught him several pathetic Scotch songs and told him some wonderful border stories. Then they went up to Edinburgh to meet Mr. Gwynne, who was delighted with his improvement.

There was little said about the tragic side of the ill-fated Queen of Scots, or of any of the sadder legends of history. They had so much to tell each other.



"And I've never been homesick," Chan exclaimed triumphantly. "I used to cry a little for Mother some nights in the hospital, but there weren't so many splendid things to talk about. And I didn't know Miss Jane so well at first. I'm a good deal older now. Why, I feel as if I had lived years," laughing gayly. "And I've learned some beautiful new songs and heard some different birds, but I think the English ones are sweeter."

"And you are not in a hurry to go home?"

"Oh, I'd like to see them all, then I'd like to fly back to you. Are you going to Germany?"

"Yes. We shall stay there quite a while. Chan, I'd like you to take a few singing lessons and some in German. I wonder if you will acquire languages easily!" studying him.

"If they are not all cut up in fractions," and the boy gave a funny little shrug.

"You'll hear a good deal of it, and you catch sounds readily."

"I feel so well now, as if I could do 'most anything."

"That's the way to feel."

Chan was very happy to have his dear friend again. They would not go to Paris this time.

"Oh, do you mean that we shall come again?" asked Chan, his eyes alight with surprise.



"My dear boy, if all goes well we may come more than once."

"And I want Linn to see London. He's such a boy for books, you know. And he means to go to the high school in the new term."

"You are a smart lot of children."

"I don't know about that," and Chan shook his head sagely. "Linn is. Rila doesn't care about high school, but she's grown very fond of music, and has come to have such a sweet, delicate touch. Then Prim learns and forgets—and well—Goldie's only fair, but I think she'll make a singer. But Rhoda's the smarter, and she seems never to forget anything. Laurel will always be the baby, and she's sweet."

The hearer smiled over the discriminating descriptions.

They spent another day in London, and then went to Holland, that the other two might see the queer country of canals.

"Are you really going to Berlin?" asked Chan.

"Yes, but to Leipsic first. Of course, you'll want to see the Emperor!"

"I wasn't thinking so much of him, but of the man who bought Miss Greatorex's picture that Primrose stood for. He lives twenty miles from



Berlin. You know, I told you on the vessel coming out—a Mr. Hoffmeyer."

"Oh, yes, we will surely hunt him up. Does the picture look like Primrose?"

"Well—not *very* much."

"Because if it did I'd have to buy it back."

"Oh, you couldn't. He would not sell it."

Mr. Gwynne smiled.

"It was very odd that it happened that way," he said. "Yes, we will surely hunt him up."

Mr. Gwynne did not overload the young brain with descriptions of the places they passed through. He took out pad and pencil and began to jot down things he wanted to remember. Chan tired of the sights floating by that were a good deal alike, and he shut his eyes, leaning his head down on his companion's shoulder, and presently fell asleep.

They had journeyed so much in the last few days. It was almost evening when they reached the city, and the noisy halt wakened him, so he sprang up.

"Nothing has happened," smiling down in the startled face. Nurse Jane rose also. She had been in the seat behind.

"I am afraid he has been a burden on you, Mr. Gwynne. You had better have put him in the seat with me."



"He was leaning partly against the back of the seat. The sleep was good for him. We will stay at the hotel to-night and settle ourselves by daylight to-morrow."

Oh, how queer the talk sounded, and the porters looked different again. How could there be so many different people in the world? Jane held him tightly by the hand as they pushed through the throng and came out into a quieter place. It was only a little walk to the hotel, but how narrow the street looked.

And it wasn't at all like the hotel Chan had in his mind for the great city he had been reading about. Mr. Gwynne went to the desk to register, and sent a porter up with the two while he went to give some orders about the luggage. There was a suite of three small rooms, the larger one having a table partly arranged with dishes. Jane found some washing conveniences in a closet, and proceeded to refresh herself and her charge. The journey so far had been a benefit to her, though she could not feel at home in this strange country.

Then Mr. Gwynne came, and the servant brought in some supper. She was a round, rosy girl with a great crown of flaxen hair, a queer frock, short in the waist, and the skirt showing her stockings,



which were immaculate. She talked a little broken English, and was most anxious to please.

"I've learned some German words already," announced Chan. "But they're very queer. And I don't see why we can't all be English. Do you really believe it was the Tower of Babel that mixed things up so? Seems to me they should have had them all straight by this time."

"It is a very big world, Chan, and the parties strayed off in different directions. There were no English among them."

"No English!" and Chan looked amazed.

"English is quite a modern language. German is much older. They have all been changed and improved, but I think in the end the English will win."

Chan thought the supper very queer, too. On the floor below there was some music, a band probably, but there were so many other noises and screams, as if some one must be hurt. But Chan confessed to being tired and sleepy, and Jane put him into the cot in the box-like place and kissed him good-night.

"Where are you going?" he inquired.

"To the little closet next door," laughingly. "And if you want anything, call and I shall hear you."



"Jane, do you like Germany?"

"I have not seen enough of it to decide. But I am glad we are to go back to New York. Still, I do want to see Berlin, which is said to be a most beautiful city. Good-night and go to sleep."

Oh, what were they doing at home! Chan wanted to fly over there. He had said to himself that he would not begin to count the days until the last month. He was not really homesick, but oh, he did want to hear their dear voices. And how was school going with them? After all, he was glad not to be in school and have to bring home those detestable cards.

But Chan did fall asleep, and Jane's voice woke him in the morning. The sun was shining. He ran to the window, but there was nothing except tall houses and blackened chimneys. He could see one deep pit, and while he looked a man came out of it, scrambling in a fashion that made him laugh. Jane dressed him in a clean suit and they had breakfast. Then a coach came and they climbed in.

It was quite wonderful. In the center was the great market square with four main business streets converging, and to the north the beautiful old Rathhaus, a Gothic edifice containing the life-size portraits of the old Saxon rulers. The new



Rathhaus was much more magnificent and housed the municipal museum. And there were so many celebrated points that Chan's head whirled around. And the parks, the grand Conservatory of Music!

"We have seen enough for one morning, and now we must find the new home, and Frau von Lenhardt," Mr. Gwynne then announced.

That was in the older part of the city. The street was narrow, the houses had high-pitched roofs and small windows, and here and there a courtyard with some straggling grass. At one they stopped. It had three name-plates on the door.

Mr. Gwynne rang Frau von Lenhardt's bell, and a maid ushered them up to the second floor. A lady stood in the doorway, a handsome woman of middle life, who stretched out both hands and gave a fascinating smile.

"Ah, it is the Herr Gwynne at last! Where have you been all the morning? Doing Leipsic?"

"That is about it. This is my little protégé, Chandler Firth, for whom I have bespoken your kindest interest. And this is the companion that looks after him—Miss Norris."

She ushered them through the main doorway, though there was a small, rather dark hall. The room was large, with a fine grand piano and a few



chairs and portraits and busts of the most eminent musicians. The silken portières were drawn wide apart, and there was a little sunshine in the adjoining room that looked home-like and cheerful.

"I make you most welcome, and I think I shall like the little boy. You have had a long journey, have you not?"

"Yes. But it has been very interesting. Of course we shall go home presently. And I am very well now. I had been quite ill."

"What a little gentleman!" she commented in German. Then she said to Chan in English, "You are very fond of music, I hear."

"Oh, it is the most splendid thing in the world to me," he replied enthusiastically.

"And you have come to the land of music. We do not yield to France or Italy."

The servant had conveyed Jane to a room adjoining, a long, narrow room, the window of which, like that of the large room, looked down into a garden where there were flower-beds and a small basin so arranged with a tiny fountain that used the water over and over. There were wine-drinking roses on trellises. Several of the houses joined this and had the plot in common.

The room was divided by a curtain. There was a closet built in the wall and another for lavatory



purposes. It was very clean, with a polished floor, and a rug beside each bed.

Jane began to unpack the trunk. It seemed quite comforting to think of staying here several weeks, even if the place was small and confined.

Frau von Lenhardt made some charming advances toward an acquaintance with the little boy. Then they were summoned to luncheon, and after that Mr. Gwynne said he must go.

"But you will come back to-night?" the child urged.

"Not to-night, Chan dear. I have some important business on hand. But I shall be in and out, and you and Miss Jane must take some drives about. Oh, you will find many things to entertain you."

But Chan held on to his hand until the latest moment, and he winked very hard as he turned away.

"Now I am going to play to you," the lady said in a charming tone. "Then I think I shall ask you to sing for me. Singing, you see, is not my business."

She sat down at the piano and ran her fingers over the keys, then broke into a soft melody, as if one were questioning. Chan was saying to



himself, "I can only be partly happy with my dear Mr. Gwynne away," when a sudden change startled him. It was as if she gave the keys a dozen different tones. It grew into waves of rapturous melody, and seemed to lift him up and carry him along in a new atmosphere that was the very fragrance of sound, if such a thing could be. The boy came and stood by the piano, his eyes were alight with some inward bliss that kept the wonderful glow after she had stopped.

"Oh," he sighed, "I suppose that is like heaven when all the angels strike their golden harps. I thought Mr. Gwynne played beautifully, and I could not believe him when he said there were players that were much finer than he. It is too grand. It fills you up full, as if you were ready to die."

"But you must live to hear it over again. The piano is a very fine one, I am a professional of high order. It is a positive gift, and I have spent years in perfecting it. That was a beautiful score. Yes, you are all music, as he said. But he said other wonderful things about you; that I should give you a little practice and the training a singer needs. For there is science and technic as well as the voice. And you are to learn a little German. I hope you will take to languages. French



and Italian abound in melody when rightly understood."

"I don't believe I could sing in anything but English."

"And there are the grand old Latin hymns. Oh, you are only a little boy yet. Sing up the scale as I play it."

It was a very true voice, a really remarkable gift, she saw at once. Mr. Gwynne had not overpraised it.

"I wish you would play something like that first piece."

A canary was hanging at the next-door window and had been pouring out marvelous notes, but now was silent. Frau von Lenhardt began to play, wondering why the boy should choose that, when there came a sudden strain, a warble, a low, sweet call, like an answer from the distant woods.

She turned and looked at him. "Was that you?" she asked.

His flushed face and the soft laugh answered her.

"Did Mr. Gwynne teach you that?"

"No. The birds taught me that. Goldie—that's my sister—and I do it for fun. At least we used to, but there are so many things to do now,



and there is school, and Father and Mother, and sums that I can't endure, and everything."

She laughed. "To-morrow we will begin. We might go out for a little walk."

"Could you go down in that little court? There are some children playing. And oh, there is a little boy with a violin!"

"Oh, that is Carl Mansel. He goes to the Conservatory every morning. He is one of the violins, but he is ambitious to be first when he is grown. Oh, yes, let us go down!"

There were narrow, winding stairs at the back, but here was a hand-rail. On the other side several women sat sewing or lace-making. Four little flaxen-haired girls were playing with dolls. The boy, Carl, glanced up, then went on with his playing. There were some distressful notes.

"Why doesn't he make them all beautiful?" asked Chan. "It isn't tuning."

"It is in his lesson, I suppose. You need to learn every sound, every turn."

Carl paused and bowed.

"This is a little American boy who has come for a visit with the Herr Gwynne. And he has a voice. He will be a singer."

"But I love the violin," and Carl gave it a hug.

"My sister tried to play a little, but the squeaks



distressed her so. I have a friend who plays, but he is a big boy in the high school."

"I wish you would come to the Conservatory. There you would hear some music."

"I think we shall," said the lady. "Now we must not interrupt you. Come down this evening and have a talk."

They walked around the circle. The sewing ladies nodded, the little girls stared. Chan studied the flowers and the goldfish in the basin. Then it was time for supper.

Carl came down in the evening, but did not bring his violin. He spoke rather broken English, but was learning it quite rapidly. Carl's father was in a music-shop. The older sister was a sales-girl at a confectioner's, the next son was in the army, and there were three younger children. They talked quite familiarly, and Chan aired his few German words. Some ladies came in, and the two boys went to the corner of the sitting-room, which was dining-room and tea-room as well.

The next morning two young ladies came in for a piano lesson, for Frau von Lenhardt occasionally gave them to aristocratic pupils who could afford to pay her prices. Chan listened. Ah, how much there was to learn!

Then she sang in a rather different fashion,



which was not specially interesting to him. After this came an hour over German.

"It's funny," Chan said, "that you use so many long words where we make short ones do. And oh, they are so queer. I like the Latin better."

"But you'll enjoy it when you come to the poets. We have so many of them."

Then she said they would go to one of the parks. Carl joined them and took his violin along. It was very beautiful, with its old trees that branched out in every direction, its clumps of fine shrubbery and beds of flowers. Little tables were placed here and there in the shade, and people were sitting around them, the women knitting or sewing. Carriages wound around in the avenues, sometimes full of elegantly attired ladies or bright, laughing children. It seemed as if 'most every one were talking and gesticulating.

Carl met two of his companions, who had their violins as well. They went off the main path a little, where an immense walnut-tree threw a dense shade, and began to play. Frau von Lenhardt sent for some tea and little brown German cakes that Chan thought delicious. Presently a party of older musicians begged the boys to join them, and they had a very pleasing concert.

Jane had gone out to look at the stores and do a



little shopping for herself, and to buy some articles she should send back to the hospital by mail. She was getting to feel quite at home, and was picking up many German words. She wondered she had not taken it up before, as there were several German nurses at the hospital.

They came home to a tempting supper, and when they were rested and refreshed Chan sang pretty school songs and others he had picked up. He told them, too, about last summer's picnic, and how they had gone to spend the day with the farmer whose children had all married and gone, and of his little sisters, and how Laurel had run away when sent to school, and of dear little Mrs. Peacock who had died and been buried under a rose-tree.

Frau von Lenhardt kissed him good-night, and said she would like to keep him and make a great singer out of him.

The next morning they went to the Conservatory. All the professors seemed to know the smiling Frau, and gave her a welcome. Oh, the classes and classes! Every instrument seemed to be represented, and there were bands practicing. Now and then the teacher rapped hard and uttered some fierce words. How could he hear one wrong note amid the racket?



"I don't believe I could learn there," declared Chan. "I like a teacher all to myself. But some of the violin-playing was so grand I wanted to cry. Oh, Stuart Bradley would like that! And that playing in the park! Oh, I wouldn't have missed Germany for anything!"

How lovely his eyes were in their eagerness!

"Suppose I keep you and let Mr. Gwynne go back alone?"

"Oh, I couldn't! There's Mother. She didn't want me to come—much. Father didn't either, but he thought it right. And we all love Mr. Gwynne so. I loved Nurse Jane in the hospital, too. Just think, I didn't have to be lame or limp. It's so splendid!"

They heard the sound of the piano as they came upstairs. The Frau opened the door. There sat Mr. Gwynne, who turned and laughed, and Chan's arms were around his neck, and every pulse was a thrill with delight.



## CHAPTER IX

### IN THE LAND OF SWEET SURPRISE

THEY had a delightful time at supper, and Mr. Gwynne could see that Chan had been very happy.

"You have been at Mende. The countess wrote. What is the upheaval?"

"Everything. The Lendenalls go to Paris tomorrow. It was a month-old proffer which they did not accept, the terms not reaching their demands. There was some haggling, and at last they agreed, as they wanted the family."

"And little Hilda goes? I am sorry to have her lost to Germany. She will make a fine contralto. She has the art of acting. She will be trained in opera. But I think she would get as good training here. Must the *fête* be given up?"

"Oh, no. I had meant to be present in a private capacity. Now I shall be director."

"And the dear old Countess? A disappointment would have been bitter."

"She has failed somewhat. It will be her seventy-fifth birthday. But she walks erect, her eyes



are clear and courageous, and her voice seldom trembles. The place will be magnificent. There will be three bands. You, she declares, will be her right-hand supporter. Madame Hamski sings, also the Luenberg quartette, the Graff duos are certain, and various others. The orchestra is fine. It will be the last time Schoenwerth undertakes any big *fête*. I want it to be an immense success for her sake. She has done so much for music, but she admits old age is creeping on. Yes, she expects to go to Berlin this winter for the last time, also. Seventy-six! Think of it!"

"Past the threescore and ten. And you will put your little boy in Hilda's place?"

Mr. Gwynne shook his head. "He could not learn anything well enough to sing it in German."

"But the wonderful voice will be the same in English. I can tell you it will enchant the listeners. And I am quite sure I could teach him that 'Cradle Song' of Hilda's. He would not need to understand every word, you know?" and she smiled.

"Chan, little lad, I wonder how you would feel singing to a big out-of-doors audience. It was different in church. There was the rood-screen, and it was evening. These people will look you straight in the face."



Chan colored. "I think I shouldn't feel afraid if I knew just what I was singing, and it was beautiful. I think singing sounds lovely out-of-doors."

"Oh, you'll see what we will do to-morrow. Why it would be a shame to have no one hear his voice. You *do* mean to make a singer out of him?"

"A Higher Power has made him that, care and training will do the rest. I did not mean to exploit him so soon."

"We begin earlier now. Oh, Chan, you surely would not feel afraid! He must go down to Schoenwerth. And when you have seen that lovely old lady with her silvery hair and her blue eyes and hear her sweet voice you will certainly not feel afraid. We will talk it all over to-morrow."

"I am to go down again at noon. She wished particularly to see you."

"And now it is Chan's bedtime. Sleep well, little lad, and let no dreams fright you."

They talked a long while afterward. Chandler she thought was going to make a good linguist. "And I fancy a composer. He twists melodies about, not a good thing in practice, but he makes some exquisite combinations. I suppose he won't



mind real study by and by when he understands the importance of it."

"He is rapturously fond of music, but not real study. Of course he is young yet. And I do not want him forced."

Schoenwerth and Mende had been a Duchy two centuries before. Some of it had been given in wedding portions and divided among sons. Then after the war there had been a new alignment, but the title had remained with the old Countess, who was the last of her branch. At her death it would be subdivided again. Leipsic had reached out to it.

Chandler was delighted to see his friend, though he admitted he had not been a bit homesick, there had been so much to entertain him. Only he did so wish Linn could see the University and the Conservatory, and the magnificent Augustinplatz and the wonders of the place. He went over his exercises, and even ventured upon some German sentences, though he colored and laughed, to hide his embarrassment.

They took a little drive northward first, where they could see the Pleisse and Parthe that formed the Elster, and then southerly. Schoenwerth was a great, beautiful park in spite of its subdivisions. The trees were magnificent. Little streams ran



about, wild flowers bloomed by the hundreds, birds sang, and squirrels chased each other about. There was a broad, winding road that led to the rambling old house, the tower part of which had fallen to ruins and not been replaced. Still the terraces were in fair order. And just below the terraces on the great level the erection of the audience-chamber rising tier upon tier was begun.

"There will be colored lanterns through the trees, and the stage will be lighted up. Indeed it will be a splendid sight. When the Countess was seventy there was one of these grand entertainments. Since then she has kept a more quiet birthday. And this will doubtless be the last one of this kind. But she is going into it heart and soul. She had sent for Antonio, and he had promised to look her up a conductor. Of course I had no thought of taking it in charge, but I did mean to be a spectator and give Chan the chance of seeing a fine German *fête*."

Chan looked up with a delighted smile.

The front of the house was fairly embowered with vines, some of them in richest bloom, except the great entrance with its wide carved door that stood open.

A host of servants hurried to their assistance. Why, it was almost like royalty! And the Count-



ess came out in the hall. Frau von Lenhardt was one of her favorites, and she had a warm regard for Mr. Gwynne, who had come so unexpectedly to her relief. Not but that there were leaders of music who would have been proud to undertake so unusual an affair.

The Countess was rather above the ordinary height, but had not developed the usual German stoutness. She had been a notably handsome woman, and still retained traces of it. And her dress, Chan thought, was certainly fit for a queen, with its train that with every movement shook off silvery lights, and the stomacher that was a dazzle of precious stones.

Chan could not understand the talk, but it interested him very much. Now and then there was a little reference to himself, and it brought a warm color to his face when the Countess nodded and smiled.

They were summoned to luncheon. The dining-hall had much queer old grandeur about it and the silver and china were really antique. Chan resolved to learn German as rapidly as possible, though now and then he could make out a sentence. The Countess was certainly charming, and it did not seem possible that she had lived three-quarters of a century. Oh, how many de-



lightful things he would have to tell his mother and Mr. Evans!

While the Countess went to take her after-dinner rest they rambled around, Mr. Gwynne explaining the main points of the arrangement. How fine and beautiful it would be!

"Come, Chan, let us have a little exercise in music now. Oh, Frau von Lenhardt, do you think you could train him to sing that cradle song in German? That little Hilda made a decided hit in it, and Chan's voice is finer, has more pathos. I'm sorry that anything else must be in English, but I had not really thought of bringing him out in any public way. And he is looking so well now," giving the boy's hand a fond squeeze.

It did seem as if his voice grew richer, and the ease with which he went from note to note was not the least of the charm.

"Chandler, I wonder if you remember enough of 'And There Were Shepherds' to sing it for Frau von Lenhardt? I could pick out an accompaniment, though we can't have the heavenly chorus."

"Oh, I used to sing it over and over, chorus and all," replied Chan. "And when I was getting well it was such a pleasure."

Mr. Gwynne played a little of the air, and Chan's



face settled into a rapt sort of sweetness. Then at a nod he began. It was Christmas eve, and he was back in the church with the softened lights and the pervading fragrance.

Frau von Lenhardt listened rather critically at first, then with profound attention. The voice grew sweeter and softer, until they could gather the beauty of the night, the subtle harmony of the stars, the dim wafts from the celestial atmosphere that held in it the great mystery when the divine message burst forth.

Mr. Gwynne joined the song, but Chan's voice went on, clear and untrembling.

The Countess had left her chamber leaning on the arm of her companion, with her cane in one hand, and stood in the doorway in rapt attention. Mr. Gwynne glanced up, but she raised her hand entreatingly until the last beautiful sound of the divine message still going round the world died away.

"Your boy is inspired," Frau von Lenhardt said in a breath that came from her very soul. "It is a God-given voice. Oh, you do not mean to hide it from the world even now? It is marvelous how he carries it through without aid."

"But I love it so. I sing it so much at home, you see. And I sing it in my mind when I am



going to sleep. I can see the plain and the shepherds and all the sheep cuddled close to each other."

The Countess approached and laid her soft hand on his head.

"Thank you, my child. I could wish it were Christmas, that you might enchant the lovers of the Christ-child. Some time you must come and sing it Christmas eve. I may not be here, but I think even in heaven I should hear your voice. Child, you cannot understand what a gift you have."

"I am glad to have pleased you. You are so sweet yourself," and a slight flush of color irradiated his face.

"If he could sing some little thing in German! They would not mind the words so much when they were listening to the voice."

"He will sing the 'Cradle Song,' your highness, in a manner that will make the audience forget Hilda. I shall take him in training at once. Oh, do not fear. Only we shall want Mr. Gwynne to go home without him."

"But he couldn't," said Chan simply. "He promised Father to bring me back."

They smiled at his perfect faith.

He sang a little more for the Countess, then Frau von Lenhardt said they must go home. There were many plans yet to discuss.



"But I leave it all to Herr Gwynne, who came in the hour of need——"

"And I should have paid your birthday that compliment if you had not needed. I had meant to bring the little lad for you to see and hear, though I had not counted on putting him in the forefront."

"And you will come again, and yet again?"

"Oh, yes, do not fear. It will all be right."

She sent for some cake and a drink that Chan thought must have been made of flowers, it had so exquisite a fragrance. Then they said their adieus, and the Countess kissed Chan on the forehead.

The ride in the cool evening air made Chan so drowsy that he did not want to talk, but the other two went on with their plans. There was but a week and a day, yet Madame von Lenhardt was confident she could accomplish what she had undertaken.

Chan was a very good pupil.

"Only one trouble is that your language doesn't make pictures to me as ours does. If I could see the pictures I should be all right."

But he studied manfully. He went down in the court and talked to Carl and his mother, who declared he was doing finely.





● THE COUNTESS APPROACHED AND LAID HER SOFT HAND ON HIS HEAD.—*Page 151.*







"If I had a voice like that I'd have all Leipsic at my feet and conductors quarreling over me," said Carl. "Don't they think it splendid at home?"

"I sing in our own little church, but I never went but once where I sang that Christmas anthem in a large New York church. Oh, I think there must be many beautiful singers in the world. I heard some lovely chorister boys in London."

Carl wondered how he could be so quiet about it.

Madame von Lenhardt hunted up an old half-forgotten song with an echo not unlike the high song, and found that Chan could master it quite easily.

"If you only do not balk at the pronunciations," she said.

They all went out on Thursday. Nearly everything was in order. The stage was surrounded with greenery, through which lights would shine. The most notable guests would be seated about the Countess and some of the nobility, as well as the dignitaries of the place. All the neighboring people, rich and poor, were to be made welcome.

"Oh," said Chan with a deep breath, "I shall be glad to see such a magnificent entertainment. And if all the folks could be here!"



He practiced assiduously and took all correction with such a sweetly grateful air that the madame declared him as angelic as his voice.

Saturday dawned beautifully. They went out in the forenoon and Chan had begged that Carl might be taken, which set the boy almost crazy with delight. And oh, it was like fairyland, a lovely out-of-doors palace, with the apparent grandeur of the Arabian Nights. Here and there were placed vine-wreath booths for refreshment, and simple seats all about the ground.

And then the wonderful procession of guests in all manner of grand equipages, and two military companies in their best array. The bands began to play, and the music was enchanting. The seats were filled with the nobility who were eager to pay the compliment to so revered a person as Countess of Schoenwerth and Mende.

The exercises opened with an address by the Counselor, congratulating the Countess on her birthday and her health at such an advanced age, and was replied to by her pastor, himself nearer eighty, but still erect and firm of voice. There were other congratulations from her tenants and the peasants in their best array.

And then began the real program. A famous opera singer had lent his presence, a class from the



Conservatory, and Frau von Lenhardt, one of the finest pianists of the town, part of a concerto by the four violins, a chorus by several instruments. Chan wished the cornets were there with their bird motif, but there was some fine cornet-playing. And then Chan came out, for an instant dazed by the sea of people. But Mr. Gwynne smiled, and Madame von Lenhardt struck the notes of the accompaniment. It was so queer to be singing what he could hardly understand, but where he came to the echo, repeated farther and farther away, it seemed as if the very trees forgot to rustle.

There were only two stanzas of it, and the audience waited with rapt attention until he made his bow, and then there was a wild burst of applause that seemed as if it would never stop. Chan slipped away to his seat and was lost in the crowd.

Hilda Lendenall, some two years older than Chan, had made a brilliant success with a simple little song which no one else sang so well and which was frequently in demand. Madame von Lenhardt had resolved that Chan should surpass her. He had some richer, tenderer notes in his voice. And Chan did his best in the cradle song for the sake of the charming Countess. Hilda would have almost died with envy had she heard it.



After the interludes by the band a request was preferred that the little American boy give them the pleasure of hearing his first song over again.

"If you are not too tired," said Mr. Gwynne.

"No, he was not too tired to gratify those who had been so kind to him."

"You are a darling!" said Madame von Lenhardt rapturously. "I think I shall steal you and hide you until Mr. Gwynne has gone."

There was another brief address, and then the seated audience began to leave their places and mingle with the crowd and partake of the refreshments.

The ladies crowded about Chan, surprised that he could not talk German when he had sung so well in the language. Madame von Lenhardt shielded the child as much as she could, but she was very proud of him.

The Countess thanked him most warmly. She looked very much exhausted, and the Herr Doctor who had been watching her said she must retire immediately. Mr. Gwynne would come over again to say good-by.

Then they strolled a little around the beautiful grounds, but evening was coming on and they had quite a ride to reach home. Chan and Carl went fast asleep with their arms around each other.



"You could do anything with that child," said Frau von Lenhardt with enthusiasm.

"And spoil his voice. No. But he has another gift. And if he has patience enough and will enough he may some day be a composer. He has a well of melody in his brain if it is treated rightly."

"Are the other children musical?"

"One, a girl. I shall take her in hand presently. But I wish you might see the whole eight."

"I may come to America some time again. I hear you have improved very much, and you are raising some fine singers. One reason why I like this child is that he is so happy singing to himself. He has so little desire for praise if he pleases you."

"He is a very charming boy," was the tender reply.

It was late when he woke the next morning, and Jane gave him a dainty breakfast. Mr. Gwynne had gone to church with Madame von Lenhardt to hear a wonderful new organ.

"Oh, wasn't it all splendid!" exclaimed Chan. "And that lovely old Countess who looks as if she slept on rose-leaves! Her voice is so soft and sweet that I should like to have her go on talking and not wait for any answer."

"I heard that her mother was a beautiful Italian



singer, and that the Count, her father, who was a proud old German, would never allow her to sing out anywhere. There were three sons; two were killed in duels. And she had to marry the Count of Mende. Then the other brother died and the father also, so she was heiress to the great estate. And she was only forty when her husband died. She has been a lovely, gracious woman, the kindest mistress, the most generous friend, and very public-spirited. She began with these birthdays when she was fifty, and has given one every five years."

"I don't know any one like that in America," said Chan gravely, then after a moment added—"I think Father would make a nice count or a prince. He always tries to do lovely things to the poor. But he is not so very rich."

"He is generous, though. And so good to children. I've always been so glad he sent you to our hospital. And now, Chan, I've had just the loveliest time with you and Mr. Gwynne. And to see the beautiful big German cities and to hear such splendid music! I had not expected to go out of Great Britain."

"How many nice things you'll have to tell the children. I wish little Arthur could hear them."

Mr. Gwynne came back delighted with the



organ. Madame von Lenhardt played for an hour, then they went for a drive through a beautiful forest where the birds sang enchanting choruses and the trees whispered refrains. Chan could not listen to what the others were saying, the melody was so sweet.

That evening Chan sat with Mr. Gwynne's arm around him when the elder said:

"Chan, I am going on a little business trip tomorrow morning and shall not be back until Tuesday night. Meanwhile, do what singing you can, and Jane must pack up so that we can take an early train on Wednesday morning. I'm sorry we can't go to London, but I thought you would rather see Berlin and Herr Hoffmeyer and have the glimpse of Primrose. And you will have to miss the splendid oratorio, but we shall come again. I do not think it is quite as fine in New York. Have you had a nice time, little boy?"

"Oh, it's been just full of delight. I'm glad there is something to give up, for there have been so many pleasures. And Miss Jane has enjoyed it all so much."

"And you have both improved wonderfully in looks, though Dr. Richards said it would be the best thing for you. And now study all you can in these two days, for the rest will be vacation."



"And then do we go straight home?"

"This time we sail from Hamburg. I have to see a person there. But the voyage will be just as nice."

"Oh, home!" Chan clasped his hands.

"You've been a brave little fellow, Chan."

"But it has all been so lovely! And you are so good!"

Mr. Gwynne laughed and gave him a squeeze, and they said good-night.

Chan sang a good many times the next two days, with little rests between. Frau von Lenhardt succeeded quite well on one point, that of keeping Chan's attention on just what was before his eyes, and not allowing his voice to stray among the fugitive melodies of his brain.

"If I should have thee for a year thou wouldst get in most excellent training. Thou art too much indulged! But it is a wonderful voice, and thou wert born fortunate."

"No, the 'fortunate' happened later on," and he gave a soft laugh, thinking of the little lame boy and the old red house with Mr. Mann driving along.

Still there were tears in his eyes at the parting.

"He is coming back to Germany," said Mr. Gwynne. "He will be in love with it."



But Chan enjoyed the journey. There were so many odd things and people, and when he was tired he leaned his head down on Mr. Gwynne's shoulder and went to sleep. Jane proposed that he should be put over into her seat, but the gentleman smilingly shook his head.

This time it was not lodging, but a hotel. It was a strange city again. And after a satisfying meal they went out for a little walk through the best-lighted streets.

"But all the glories must be inspected by daylight. You and Miss Jane may ride and walk to-morrow. I shall be very much engaged. I think you must find time for the museums. The next morning there is to be a grand organ recital. And there is to be an opera of 'Martha,' I found. You were so interested in that. Some day maybe you will hold *Martha's* candle for her and sing her good-night song. Oh, we shall not see a tenth part, but you can come again, and again."

It was not very bright the next morning but not rainy. Mr. Gwynne had a program for the driver, who came with an open carriage and was fairly obsequious. Chan had picked up so much German that he felt quite learned already. The old part built along the arms of the Spree had been much



modernized. Indeed, Berlin was considered one of the best-ordered cities in Europe. But the finest and most beautiful centered around the Unter den Linden, with its royal palaces and its social and official life. There seemed guards in military attire everywhere, and splendid equipages with spirited steeds. There were many handsomely dressed ladies. Then their vehicle made a sudden turn out of the street, and the driver made a low obeisance.

"It is the Empress," he said, "and her Highness the Princess. Ach! she is a gracious lady."

Chan gave them a long look. "And we saw the Queen of England and her daughter," he said with a smile.

Yes, it was a sight worth seeing, under the beautiful lindens with all their famous memories, the historic gates, the statues and monuments, the soldiers, and the throngs of people. There were some magnificent bridges: the *Schlossbrücke*, with its eight colossal figures of white marble, and others with famous stories.

They had taken a little luncheon and fruit with them, and now drove to the great picture gallery, where Jane said the man might come for them in an hour.

"It will rest us to walk around a little," added



Miss Jane. "Indeed, I am really tired of sight-seeing."

"Things get all mixed together," said Chan with a tired sort of smile. "I like Leipsic better."

"That is because we were not whirled about so. I don't know how people can run all over Europe in six weeks. I don't wonder they come home with nervous prostration."

There were many curious old pictures, queer paintings of bygone times, fine modern ones, and others commemorating great battles. But they really failed to enjoy them, and neither understood enough to be at all critical. They were glad when their carriage came and they were landed safely at the hotel, where they both took quite a rest before Mr. Gwynne came. And then there was dinner.

Chan was delighted with the organ recital the next day. The organ was magnificent, the player extremely fine. The boy knew next to nothing of the composers, but the sound filled him with the most exquisite satisfaction.

In the afternoon he had a delightful walk with Mr. Gwynne in one of the smaller parks. People seemed very happy and joyous, and children ran about gayly.

The opera was a *matinée*. Chan had read the



story and several others at Frau von Lenhardt's. Hence he could follow the motif pretty well, but some of the acting did not please him at all. The *Martha* was not the pretty young girl he had pictured her; but her voice was certainly fine. The tenor entranced him, however, and the "Good-night" was charming beyond any words.

"Oh," he said afterward, "if I should have a tenor voice, and the madame thinks I surely will, do you suppose I ever can sing like that?"

"That is an Italian voice. Chan, you may not sing love songs like that, but you will be fine in oratorio. I'm sorry you couldn't have heard the 'Messiah' in London. We seldom do anything quite like that in New York. It takes a grander voice for those sacred things."

They went out to the Hoffmeyers' the next morning. Mr. Gwynne had made an appointment and the Herr was ready with a cordial welcome. Frau Hoffmeyer was stout, but still comely in true German fashion.

It was, one might say, a forest house, so surrounded was it by tremendous trees. Quite at the back was a garden in fine order, and farther still a big enclosure for stock. The house was severely plain with some old-fashioned cumbrous pieces of furniture two centuries old. There was



a music-room with fine engravings of the noted musicians on the walls, a really beautiful piano, two violin-cases, and a flute.

Adjoining this was a much smaller room with some pretty modern furnishings and pictures, two small tables with gifts that had been sent to the daughter, and there was "The Girl with the Violin."

"It is more like her than we ever thought to have," said Frau Hoffmeyer. "Some made her so stiff you would know at once she could not play the violin. You see the little portrait had no grace." It was indeed that of a chubby German child. "And she is your sister?" placing her hand on Chan's shoulder.

"Yet it isn't quite like her," and Chan studied it closely. "But Primrose is always laughing and talking and flying around. And she will not learn the violin, she declares."

"Has she as beautiful hair as that? It is true German hair."

"Oh, yes. But she doesn't like it much."

"It is beautiful," said the mother. "I did not think an American girl could be so like her. And we are so glad, so glad your lady painted it."

"No, it isn't Primrose exactly, but Miss Greator-ex did get a most charming pose. How odd



it seems that it should come over here to Germany to comfort the parents for their loss," remarked Mr. Gwynne.

They had a long talk on music, and Mr. Gwynne gratified them by sitting down at the piano and playing some brilliant selections. Then Chan won all their hearts by his two little German songs.

They were summoned to luncheon and had a very pleasant meal. Then they were most cordially invited to come for a longer visit whenever they were in Germany.



## CHAPTER X

### COMING HOME

So they said good-by to Germany, and Chan was very glad and very sorry, and could hardly tell which feeling was uppermost. But there was to be another adventure.

They were waiting for their train when another came in. A tall man stared at the group a moment, then crossed over.

"It's Chandler Firth, isn't it, and Mr. Gwynne? And oh, this is Nurse Jane. How glad I am to meet you! And this is my son Harry. I'm sorry you look just as if you were about to leave."

"But we are glad to meet you," returned Mr. Gwynne. "It is quite like greeting old friends. We have been very much interested in the sad story of your little son."

"And he owed so much to Nurse Jane and Chandler here. I must thank you both again. This meeting is a great pleasure to me. I have just been at my son's school. He has finished his term there and we are going on to Russia, where



I have some business engagements. But I think I shall place Harry in an American college, and I hope to bring him up as a good American citizen. We hardly care enough for our own country. Chandler, have you had a nice time?"

"It has been splendid."

"He had had a fever, and I brought him a good deal for the sea-voyage, which has improved him greatly."

"And there have been so many wonderful things and people, and oh, the music!"

"You are in most excellent hands. Mr. Gwynne, you have material for a first-class singer. I have heard of Chandler's triumphs. I wish you all success," and he pressed the small hand warmly.

"Oh, thank you," and the boy's face was in a glow.

Harry studied him curiously. He had begun to appreciate the romance of his little brother.

"And how are all the other children?" asked Mr. Collamore. "Some day when I am at home we must have another picnic. I want Harry to see you all."

Then the bustle for the train began, and they had to say good-by. Mr. Collamore sent warm greetings to the hospital and to Chandler's family.



"Wasn't that quite delightful!" Chandler said to Nurse Jane. "And isn't the big boy handsome! Poor little Arthur! But he's all right in heaven. How curiously you come to know people."

"And Mr. Collamore has been very generous to the hospital. It was a blessed thing that the poor little invalid came there."

Then they started on their homeward journey through queer foreign towns and over rivers until the port was reached. Then Chandler felt they were really going home. Oh, how soon he should see them all! And there was the little bustle of finding staterooms and looking up luggage.

"You are glad enough, Chan?" asked his friend, studying the happy face.

"But I wouldn't give up one day of it all. And somehow music seems a grander thing to me, though nothing could make it any lovelier. It's the beautiful feet upon the mountains of those that bring glad tidings. And, oh, Mr. Gwynne, I'm so glad *you* found me," and he pressed his lips to the hand he held.

"Not any gladder than I am," he returned, much moved.

It was lovely weather. Chan felt a little queer at first, but it soon passed over. Mr. Gwynne found many friends, but he did not mean to share



Chan promiscuously. Yet the second day out he met Miss Griswold, the soprano of the church where Chan had sung on Christmas eve.

"Oh," she exclaimed when the first greetings were over, "I want to ask you about the lovely voice that surprised us on Christmas eve. None of the 'faculty,' " and she gave a little shrug, "have been able to learn anything about him except that in some way he is your find. St. Jude is on the lookout. Allouby can't sing another year, as his voice is growing uneven and wants a year's rest, if it is not irreparably injured, so Perkins is on the watch——"

"Yes, it is *my* find," and Mr. Gwynne gave a quiet smile that expressed ownership. "I'm not in a hurry to exploit it. He was a success in a grand birthday *fête* in Germany. They would make a bid for him there. He is really a musical genius, and sings for the very love of it."

"Let us make a bid, too! Everybody was enchanted that night. Tell me something about him."

"He is one of a household of eight children who are charming and amusing and regardless of frills. They have a sweet mother, and a stepfather as good as gold, just an every-day kind of man. He has the first love-lien on the child, and I think I come next."



"But how *did you* find him? I know you are on the watch all the time. And those two cornet-ists! They say you have that bird chorus all tied up as well as the two men."

"That is my business, you know. I should like to have a band some day, but I want it first-class. There's a romance about it all. You are fond of romances, I believe," and he laughed.

"Yes, and love stories. You were not in love with the mother?"

"But I *am* half in love with the mother, only this Mr. Mann has distanced me. There's a girl, too, with a promising voice, a laughing face, and curly red hair. I shall take her up presently. And they two put together this song of the birds."

"Well, go on. I am all attention."

So he began with the hospital story, and told how he had followed up the child and become interested in the family. Then he recounted Chandler's several successes and his overpowering love of music, his rare gift of seizing upon every note of melody.

"Wasn't that the little boy that sang at the birthday *fête* at some Countess' where you conducted the music? I saw it in the journal, but I couldn't decide whether he was German or Ameri-



can. Well, that *is* a find, if the voice holds out. You remember that Goldsby boy? And now his voice isn't worth a penny."

"He was exploited too much. My nightingale shall not be. Or lark, if you like the term better."

"But he sang in German!"

"He knows the words of two songs," laughing. "But I think he will make a good linguist. Otherwise he is no prodigy, but the sweetest little chap you would meet in a year's journey. And I'm going to be very proud of my share of him."

"Howard Gwynne, you are a lucky fellow!"

"A discoverer of genius, which is next to being a genius," he returned.

Jane and her charge came walking slowly down the deck. Mr. Gwynne held out his hand and Chan took it with a smile. Then followed the introductions. Miss Griswold made room for him beside her.

"I heard you in the Christmas eve anthem in New York. I suppose you have forgotten me in the crowd, and I am very glad to meet you again."

"It was such a beautiful church, with the low lights and the fragrance of the greens and all the chants and the lovely music. Why, you could fairly see the plain and the shepherds and how sur-



prised they must have been at the wonderful tidings and the glory that shone around. Why, it was all like a picture!"

And not a word of himself when he had been the star in the setting. How the soft eyes deepened in their emotion! She wanted to hug the child to her heart and cover the sweet face with kisses.

"I want to hear about that German *fête*. I was over in London, but I went mostly for the voyage and to meet a friend who had been traveling in Belgium. And I saw a paper with an account—it was some great Countess who had a splendid castle and park, just out of Leipsic."

"Oh, you could hardly imagine anything so splendid! At least I couldn't. I'm only a little boy, you know, and the finest thing I ever saw was Central Park in New York, until Mr. Gwynne took me abroad. It is all so wonderful, the great beautiful world!"

"And the Countess?"

"Oh, she was a sweet old lady and looked as a queen might at a grand reception. She was seventy-five—did the paper say that? I used to think if any one was fifty that was awfully old, but she was so straight and beautiful and gracious that you almost wanted to fall down and worship her. And the place was grand. The great people



came, officers and all; and her people, the peasants, as they called them. Oh, it was splendid!"

"And you sang for them! Weren't you a little bit afraid?"

"She and Mr. Gwynne wanted me to, and it is so nice to please people who are good to you."

Helene Griswold smiled a little. What a sweet innocent he was! Would the world spoil him presently?

It was soon noised about, rather to Mr. Gwynne's dissatisfaction, but he took it in good part. Fame was certainly coming early to Chan. But he was somewhat abashed about it.

There was music every evening, and a committee planned quite a grand concert. Miss Griswold would sing, and a fine contralto offered her services. Then a quartette was arranged. Mrs. Delmar, Miss Griswold's friend, was quite a well-known pianist. Mr. Gwynne could not refuse his services. But the great interest was in hearing Chandler Firth sing, and he did it with the same sweet grace that always characterized him.

There were several well-to-do Germans on board, one who had recently taken a professorship in Columbia College, and the simple cradle song went to their hearts, and Chan could hardly convince them that he knew very little German.



"But you did it so sweetly. A little girl used to sing it at Berlin, but you add something that goes straight to the heart. Oh, some day you will be famous with that voice."

"I mean to learn to speak German as well. And I want to know about the famous German musicians. Why, I never supposed I could like Germany so well!"

For the next few days Chan was quite a hero, and in great demand, but Miss Griswold shielded him from too much intrusion. And before they were in, one of the party approached Mr. Gwynne rather hesitatingly.

"Your little boy has given us so much pleasure that we want him to have a remembrance of it and our regard, so we make him a little offering that you can use as you like, as you are his guardian. This is one of the most delightful voyages we have made, and we thank you for much of the pleasure."

It was a little box of gold pieces that he found presently was one hundred dollars.

And now they came in sight of Home, where Liberty gave them her welcome. Was he really so near? There were tears in Chan's eyes.

So many farewells! Why, it was almost as hard as going away. And Miss Griswold made Mr.



Gwynne promise he would bring Chan to visit her.

Oh, was that truly his dear mother and father! Chan's breath almost strangled him with joy. And how queer New York looked after the foreign cities. Yes, Chan was rosy and well, but there was something different about him, not less charming or tender, but not quite the old Chan. Had he grown away from them?

It took some time to get matters settled. Jane, with many heartfelt thanks, was started in a cab for the hospital. The others were sent to Mr. Gwynne's hotel with instructions to wait until he came.

Chan kissed first one, then the other.

"I can't tell you how splendid it has been, but I'm so glad to be home with you once again. And I'm so well—nothing tires me now—and I'm just full of joy! It's such a splendid world! But I wished Linn could see some of it, especially London and Berlin. I hope some time Prim will go and see her German double, but you could tell at once that she loved her violin. And her parents just adore the portrait. I have so many messages for Miss Greatorax. Oh, I want to see the children so. I can hardly wait!"

Mrs. Mann would rather have gone straight



home, but it would have looked ungracious. And she had her dear boy to herself first. She wanted to laugh and to cry in one breath.

Mr. Gwynne joined them presently, and had ordered luncheon. There would be some new plans to talk over, and he would be up soon. Chan had been a delightful companion, and Miss Jane had really given him a mother's care. And now there would be the summer vacation with no very severe duties and so much to talk over.

"And I shall miss my little lad," Mr. Gwynne said. "I have grown very fond of him, but I think presently Marigold must come in for a share."

"Oh, I wish she could see the Countess!" was Chan's rejoinder.

Mrs. Mann was so excited that she could hardly eat any luncheon, but the boy did his part royally. Then they looked up their train, and Mr. Gwynne summoned the hack and Chan's belongings were safely bestowed.

"It is only a temporary good-by," said Mr. Gwynne, but he kissed Chan tenderly.

Chan sat with his mother and leaned on her shoulder while she clasped his small hand. Not so very long ago she had thought of their growing up and leaving the little old house. Had she



grown selfish with prosperity? Some one had come in her life to care for her, to be her companion through years, perhaps. The children's lives were yet to be lived, and they had some choice in them. Then she laughed at a homely country comparison—how the hen sought the nice tidbits for her chickens when they were little and folded them under her wings, and when they grew older trained them to shift for themselves. And if some lovely events should come into their lives why should she be jealous?

Mr. Mann sat a little sidewise and smiled over at them. Chan fell asleep with a sweet smile on his face. He seemed to have a fine gift for dropping into the land of Nod. But when his mother said, "Come, Chan!" he was awake in a moment.

There was a deputation to meet them. Dan with the big surrey, all the children but the twins, and a dozen schoolboys. Chan was hugged and kissed until the breath was nearly squeezed out of his body.

That was the joy of coming home. And now who would fill up the surrey?

"Oh, Chan, if you haven't grown altogether too aristocratic, won't you walk with us? The boys would like it so," pleaded Linn.

"Why, I'd like to. I'd like to stretch my legs



on a country road, and we can take the cross-cuts. You won't mind, Mother—Father——?”

Prim and Goldie insisted on walking as well. Some of Chan's bundles were taken instead. It was so nice to be with the boys, though they pulled him this way and that, and made frantic grasps at his arms. They were so glad to have him. The idea of having been to Europe, of having seen London, and Edinburgh, and Leipsic and Berlin!

“And you saw that picture of the girl!” cried Prim. “Did it look like me?”

“No, Prim, not very much. But I was so glad to see it that I could have run up and kissed it. And they are so very proud of it. They are very Dutch, too, but so cordial and nice. Only I did wish I knew German; it would have been just splendid. But the music! Oh, it would just set you wild!”

“I think I'll take up German next year,” exclaimed Stuart. “I *would* like to travel.”

“So we all would!” cried the chorus.

They insisted upon seeing Chan to the very steps of the porch, and would be over again to-morrow. Cap came out, and, of course, kissed him with fervor.

“Why, you've grown, and you've fattened up, and what pretty pink cheeks! But you made a



big hole in the family, and we just managed to live without you. Come, dinner's been ready this half-hour, and like as not sp'iled! Oh, Chan, could you eat them Dutch things and sauerkraut?"

Chan laughed. "Why, sauerkraut isn't bad, and you see I've not been starved."

Such a time as they had over the dinner, and afterward out on the porch! The Chedisters came in to congratulate the boy—they had grown very neighborly—and the Greers and Mr. and Mrs. Boyce. It was midnight before they could get to bed. Tip had hovered around his brother with many curious questions. Did he see any bears while he was in Germany? At this they all laughed. And he thought Chan would be different, somehow. And what was a countess like?

"Do you remember the time we came over here to spend Thanksgiving, and how we hustled around afterward and built a fire and put the twins to bed? I thought of that," said Prim. "What a lot of good times we've had in our lives! And now we're getting grand and aristocrockery, and we'll all go abroad, some time."



## CHAPTER XI

### THE JOY OF THE OLD THINGS

"HURRAH! hurray! I've won the day! Look at that card, and if you have tears of joy please shed 'em. One hundred in everything! Now if I should die of paralysis of the brain you will know what did it. A clear, shining path to the high school. The next boy had ninety-eight. That was what took Stuart in, and much as I love him I couldn't hold back my knowledge and tell a lie. Then I didn't have any cherry-tree."

"But Father has," commented Chan, who had taken a late nap and was up in time for luncheon. "But, Linn, I'm tremendously glad! I never could do it myself, and I don't believe another one in the family will ever achieve it unless it is Rhoda."

"Oh, Linn," cried his mother, "Father will be just delighted."

"They're going to have a grand time Friday evening. And, Chan, Mr. Bradford wants you to sing one solo. You will, won't you? I half



promised. And a crowd of boys are coming over this afternoon. They consider it a miracle that you have escaped the dangers of the briny deep and been restored to the family bosom."

Linn had run on ahead. The girls had stopped to talk over the returned traveler, and they really longed to join the crowd. So many things had happened that Chan knew nothing about.

"Children, do eat your lunch," entreated their mother.

Yes, school had closed. There had been only the giving out of cards this morning, and the announcing of candidates for the high school.

"I tell you what," began Linn, "I've almost broken my constitution and dislocated the left lobes of my brain. You don't know how I've worked. Chan, will you have some practice in fractions?"

The younger made a very wry face.

"Why, I don't think fractions so horrible," said Goldie. "It's rather funny to divide and subdivide until you don't have anything left, if it isn't luncheon time."

They all laughed.

"There is still something left on the table," rejoined Chan. "Oh, folks, you don't know how splendid it is to be home with you all. Seems to



me Laurel has grown the most of any of you, and she's pretty as a pink."

"I think roses are prettier," said Tip.

"I'm glad you like me," and Laurel sidled up to her brother. "And I've learned so many things with Amy Boyce. I can read in the book now."

"Still I thought it took quite a smart little girl to read out of a book."

That puzzled Lal's brain a little.

When the boys came, they took the out-of-doors and lounged on the grass under the trees, plying Chan with so many questions that he grew quite confused, as if he had been away years instead of a few months. Oh, but they had a most cordial, jolly time.

The girls had been promoted, of course.

"And you must get in the high school next year, Rilla," declared Linn. "You see, the high school is a great honor. Oh, I wish you wanted to go to college."

"But I never shall," was the quiet rejoinder.

College meant more to boys, Linn admitted.

There were calls all the afternoon. Sometimes Chan was sent for, but he was getting rather tired of being "made so much of." Some girls came over as well. They were going to decorate the auditorium on Friday morning with flags and



trailing vines, and in the evening all the pupils would be dressed in white. Rilla and Goldie were in some songs.

Cap took a great cake out to the boys, who gave her three cheers. What a fine time they had! When Mr. Bradford came he was greeted with an invitation to join them, and he had a most enjoyable call.

Friday evening was a great event at the Morton School. There had never been so many high scholarships before. The room was tastefully decorated, the few essays were excellent, the songs and choruses well rendered, and Chan thought they could have done very well without him, but he did sing with his whole heart and was rapturously applauded.

Rhoda brought home a fine note from Miss Raynor. She said the two children were admirably prepared for a higher school than hers, and that they were so much in advance of the other children they should be with higher-grade pupils. She spoke very flatteringly of Rhoda, and should take a warm interest in her future career.

"O dear!" sighed Prim. "To think of four girls trailing to one school! I'm so glad Lal isn't smart!"

"But Rhoda will be in the primary grade."



"Still we'll have to see her started on the right road home, and see that she doesn't wander off after strange gods. There are a great many troubles and trials in this world."

"Well, she's pretty *ondependant*, as Granny Keen used to say, and she *must* ride home, whether we do or not," remarked Goldie. "We don't always want her tagging after us."

On Saturday the children felt they had a right to their own lives. Chan wanted to go over to Denby. It really was changing. The Creamery people were building some new houses for their employees, and a long row of sheds for their cows.

"It isn't exactly the 'cattle on a thousand hills,' since there are no real hills, but it is funny to see so many of them."

"And, Chan, the Dowdens are going into the chicken business, and the Greens have bought that long strip of meadow land to raise hay. Why, Denby is looking up. And the folks don't see how the Bachmans can get so much off of our ground, and he doing coat work all the time. They are really a pattern of industry. And Mr. Wells has opened a real carpenter shop and is setting up for a builder. Why, we *are* improving. Our little old house may be worth a fortune presently if it shouldn't fall down. Grandfather Chandler built



it, and it is going on for a hundred years," laughingly.

Of course they had to stop to see Mrs. Briggs and her family, who were overjoyed to find Chan looking so well and rosy.

"And weren't you a bit afraid, 'way out on the ocean?" asked Lidie. "Didn't you see even a speck of land?"

"Not one little speck," laughed Chan. "But it was beautiful when the sun shone and when the stars came out at night. And one evening a lady read a wonderful poem about an Ancient Mariner. I think Mr. Evans has it. And there were music and dancing, and walking up and down, and talking and laughing, and you hardly felt the motion of the vessel. I was a little sick at first, but coming back I felt just splendid."

"Well, it is wonderful," exclaimed Lidie and Grandmother in the same breath.

Chan did not want to stop anywhere else, so they just sauntered round.

At Grafton there had been some changes. Two long, straight avenues that were not much except roads had been graded and curbed, and some handsome new houses started. And the paper-mill nearer Ridgewood had been added to, and was doing a thriving business.



"Mother," said Primrose, "they think the minister's son is dying. And Mrs. Briggs says they seem a good deal disappointed in Mr. Crawford, for he visits scarcely any. And the children run wild. The house and garden don't look as they did in Mr. Burnham's time. They are wishing they had not let him go."

"They should have appreciated him and tried to help him along. A minister cannot do quite everything. They are very happy at Oaklands, and he is doing good work. I am sorry they took such an old man at Denby, but they wanted some one for a small salary, and Mr. Crawford has some means of his own. But with the sick son and the grandchildren it must be rather hard for him."

"And Mrs. Crawford isn't any sort of a house-keeper, they say."

"Don't gossip, Prim."

It was true that the Denby minister had been a great disappointment. He had come for a home and the country air for his son. Young Mrs. Crawford had been rather stiff; she considered the people dreadful, thinking only of doing shop-work and making money.

Mr. Evans came in to dinner. He had barely congratulated Chan on his return, for he knew there would be so many calls. Yes, Chan was the



same sweet, simple-hearted boy, but more alive to music than before, and they had a delightful evening.

The house seemed overflowing with children after that. The little mother was often at her wits' end. But there was the fine out-of-doors, and Rhoda was very fond of the pony, to which she really laid claim. But Lal liked Dan and Bonnie, for she could take out Amy, and sometimes Gladys, who really liked the little girls better than Rhoda.

"I wonder what we shall do all the long vacation? I suppose one does get tired of just play," sighed Prim.

"I am glad you are learning that, Primrose," said her mother. "Life is not all having fun, as you call it."

"I wonder what we did in the little old house."

"Well, there were carpet-rags to cut and sew, and stockings to knit. Neither are needed now. And you girls were very helpful. Times change, or at least circumstances do, and the old things are not necessary. Amaryllis is learning a good deal about housekeeping. Some day Cap may leave us and we may not be so fortunate again. And you can try music. There are a great many fine books to read. And you must acquire a little more



perseverance. You fly too much from one thing to another. Many of the habits you indulge in now will be troublesome to correct in later years. You will not be a child always."



## CHAPTER XII

### LINN'S HOLIDAY JOURNEY

MR. MANN found a business journey necessary. "Linn," he began, "I can't send you to Europe, but you might like to look a little about your own country. I must go out to the western part of the State, and perhaps to Chicago. Coming back, we might take in Niagara. How would you like that?"

"Oh, Father!" And Linn clasped his arm, looking up with shining eyes.

"Will it ever come our turn?" asked Primrose.

"Perhaps next year," with a laugh. "You must be taken by degrees and see different places, so that you can compare notes. I don't mind if you each think your own pleasure the best."

"Of course Chan's was the grandest."

"Well, you don't know what may happen to you some day."

They talked of it all day, but could not envy Linn. That evening Mr. Gwynne came up with their father, and they were all delighted to see him.



After dinner they went out on the porch, and it was amusing to see how they huddled around him.

"You are not going to take Chan away again?" exclaimed Goldie.

"No. Chan has had his vacation, and now he must go to studying. I have been making arrangements with the signor. Chan is to go over three days in a week for a voice practice and a German lesson. Yet, this visit is mostly to him, and as you share each other's sorrows and joys, and have no secrets, you can all listen. Perhaps he has told you how the dear old Countess made much of him. I was paid generously for my services, and I meant to share it with Chan. But yesterday came a most charming letter, and one for Chan, and in mine a check for one hundred dollars which is to be devoted to the boy's musical education. If your letter is as tender and touching as mine, I'm afraid you will cry over it. And another delightful letter came from Madame von Lenhardt. Chan, you can recall Mr. Bernstein, who took so much interest in getting up the concert! Just as we were separating he put a box in my hand for you, but in all the flurry it slipped from my mind, and you must forgive me. I opened it after you were gone, and to my surprise it had a lot of gold pieces



and a note for both of us. Mine was most polite and gentlemanly, as he said a few admirers had begged to make you a small gift of appreciation, and he hoped I would not object to it. Chan, there is another hundred dollars. You will sing yourself into a fortune, and when I am a poor and improvident old man I hope you will be good to me."

"Oh, Mr. Gwynne!" Chan's arms were around his neck, but he was speechless.

They might have cried, but Prim jumped up and gave a whirl around and exclaimed:

"Oh, don't you believe those people living in the forest would like to adopt me because I was something like their little girl! I'll begin to study German to-morrow, so as to get ready."

"Oh, Prim, *would* you go?"

"Well, something ought to happen to me."

"I made some inquiries about Mr. Bernstein and find him a very well-thought-of person, one of the partners in a large lace-importing house. Every year he goes abroad. Chan, you must write him a nice acknowledgment and tell him that I delayed bringing you the box. It certainly was very delicately done."

Yes, there were the shining gold pieces. The children had to count them over and over. Chan



wouldn't read the letter from the Countess just then, for he really wanted to cry, as it was.

Linn made a funny speech of congratulation, and Tip's comments were amusing. Could Chan spend the money?

"I think we'll make his father trustee and put it in the bank at present. You already have almost everything that is best for young people. Wants increase as you grow older," said Mr. Gwynne.

"They are very fortunate children," said their mother with a tender, grateful glance at her husband.

Then they went on talking about the wonderful journey and meeting Mr. Collamore and his son. Chan had heard twice from Mrs. Brenner. She and her husband had accepted a friend's yachting invitation and gone up along the coast of Scotland and all the islands. They were also to visit Norway, but would not reach the Baltic Sea in time to meet Chan anywhere.

Mr. Gwynne had to go the next morning, but he thought he might meet Linn and his father in Chicago.

"I'm going to study as hard as I can," whispered Chan, with his parting kiss.

"Not too hard, little lad! But the signor will know what is right."



Then they made Linn and his father ready, and they started on their journey. And just a day or two later came some unexpected news. They had heard quite regularly from Mrs. Alden, who had written about coming home, as she called it, and did not seem to take root in the new place, though her son was very glad to have her help him get out of debt with her wise economy. There was only the little boy left. The wife, it seemed, had not been much of a housekeeper. And now Mr. Alden had met a nice, thrifty girl of six-and-twenty, and the mother was much pleased.

Then the first wife's uncle, who had an excellent farm some twenty miles from the city, and was a nice, steady man with two married sons, came in quite frequently, always bringing some choice fruit or vegetables, and occasionally taking out the little family for a Sunday, and was very friendly. Presently he surprised her by an offer of marriage.

"Mother," said her son, "you'll be doing first-rate by marrying him. I'd like to have you near by, and Virginia thinks you are just about right. We shall be married in the early fall, but I don't want you to go until after that. We've always liked Mr. Benson so much."

Sometimes, as Mrs. Alden wrote, she could not think of giving up her claim on the happy home



she had had with them. She did so want to see the children. But she would have a nice home to invite them to, and it would be a pleasant change. And he was a man one could respect and grow very fond of, she thought. He was just a plain country farmer, not much like Mr. Mann, but he was fond of his little nephew and his own grandchildren. "And I shall be growing older, and the nice home would be a comfort." Bessy wondered if she had not cared for Mr. Mann. She would have made him an admirable wife—but there were the children he wanted.

"O dear!" cried Primrose, "we had counted on her coming back, hadn't we? And if Cap should marry and go away, what would we do?"

"There might be some one else," returned her mother sagely.

"But you wouldn't like to give up Cap?"

"No, I shouldn't," said Mrs. Mann frankly.

"Yet I feel that she has a right to her own life, and most women love a home of their own. I want you girls to learn what is necessary to the keeping of a comfortable home, a happy one, I hope."

"Do you suppose we shall be married?" asked Goldie in a sort of wondering tone.



"I mean to be announced," cried Prim. "I can cook some things."

"There is a great deal beside cooking," said their mother.

"But we can make beds and sweep rooms and dust," began Prim.

"And Rilla always makes things look pretty, just as if they grew there. Oh, Rilla, I hope you won't be an old maid!"

Amaryllis flushed. "I don't believe I should mind very much. I shouldn't like to be very old, and I hope I won't get cross and snappy. If the rest of you marry, Mother will want some one as she and Father grow old—won't you, Mommy?"

"Yes, dear," and the mother kissed her.

There was her music practice. Chan said she had improved wonderfully, and that her touch was just the thing for pathetic music. There they sang Jean Ingelow's song, "Oh, Fair Dove," and the mother listened with tears in her eyes.

Prim began presently in an eager tone: "Oh, do you remember how we used to make things over in the little house? And there's that pretty blue muslin that I tore across the front when I fell upstairs. I could make it over for——"

"Don't say Rhoda. She hates made-over frocks."



"Well, sweet little Lal doesn't. I mean to ask Mother. What if I could make a pretty frock without much help. Mother——"

"Well, you can try. You were very handy with dolls' clothes."

"Mother," began Rilla, "do you know I have outgrown those two beautiful white frocks. I tried one on yesterday. I didn't think I had grown so."

"Why, Rill, you are as tall as mother. Just measure."

Sure enough! With school and Chan's letters, and several girl-parties to occupy their minds, they had hardly thought of last summer's clothes.

Amaryllis brought down the two frocks. They had been purchased only the spring before.

Rilla was filling out in the shoulders and coming to have more of a womanly figure.

"I want this one," declared Prim. "I liked these rows of insertion and tucks. Let me try it on."

It was quite wonderful how it fitted. Just a little taking-up on the shoulders and shortening the sleeves.

"And I like second-hand clothes when they are pretty. I always did envy Rill this pretty, lacy thing."



"Your father *would* buy it," said Mrs. Mann. "Prim, I'm glad to have you take it. Here's one pretty summer frock without buying."

"The other isn't so pretty," said Goldie rather regretfully. "Must I take it?"

"Why, Goldie, that lovely strip of insertion in the gingham that faded so, and the pretty flouncing Mother bought the other day, would just——"

"Transmogrify it and make it beautiful. So it would. I'll have it then. And we can furnish up lots of things for dear little Lal."

"Mother," began Rilla, "I've just thought of something. I went with Miss Evans one day over to Elm Avenue. That's almost to the little woods. There is a rather neglected cottage there that was left to some people by the name of Merrill. The mother lost her little baby boy and is in very poor health. They are not—well, poverty-stricken, but look like nice poor. Two little girls came to Sunday school in their winter dresses. They are just about like the twins, and there is one smaller. Why, we might fit them out with summer things. There are so few poor people about here, and Freda Bachman can't take everything we out-grow."

"Oh, Rilla, we must go and see this Mrs. Merrill. Yes, I am glad you thought of that. I sent



some pretty things to Mrs. Burnham for her charity work, but we will see what we can do for this family."

The girls brought out their last summer's garments, except those in wearing order. They were all growing rapidly and their mother did not think it necessary to have so many changes. She tried to convince them that it was useless to endeavor to vie with the richer families in the way of dress. Yet, they were getting to be great favorites with most of their neighbors.

Amaryllis would certainly have to be provided with a new outfit. White was the best for all dress occasions, and there must be one pretty colored frock. Prim could have a new gingham. There were very pretty ready-made dresses in the stores. That saved not only time, but a good deal of thought and nervous wear.

After they had selected what would be useful at made-overs, there was a respectable pile left.

"Mother, couldn't we go over to Mrs. Merrill's this afternoon?" asked Rilla. "She said to Miss Evans that she was so lonely it was a real treat to see any one."

"Why, yes. I wanted to make a few calls."

They basted for to-morrow's sewing and bundled the other things into the closet. Prim declared



it was a regular Aunt Hitty's bundle minus the blankets and cloaks.

"And the stockings," added Goldie.

They were summoned to lunch, and then brought around Bonnie. Goldie and Prim were to go to a schoolmate's presently. A group of little girls were in the swing.

Tip just now had taken Darius Green for his hero. He was quite sure he could make a flying-machine with a little help from Dan. It would be in the form of a jacket, with wings that would extend down the arms.

It was a lovely afternoon. Mrs. Mann's first call was on a convalescing friend who was a really delightful person. She was a great reader, and Amaryllis enjoyed the talks very much. Now she wanted to learn what Chandler thought of his trip, and was glad to hear that Linn was to have his share of pleasure.

Mrs. Merrill lived in a sort of southwesterly direction, the oldest part of Grafton, when there had been farms around. There was a little flower-garden in front, very tidily kept, and a wide, vine-covered porch. Two little girls ran out when Bonnie stopped. There was no hitching-post, so Rilla passed the strap around the tree, as Dan told her it was always safest.



A pale, gentle-looking woman came down the steps.

"Oh," rather hesitatingly, "it is Miss Firth."

"And this is my mother, Mrs. Mann. We were out calling——"

"I am very glad to see you. Will you take seats on the porch—it is pleasanter than indoors. I try to sit out all I can."

"You are not very well?" began Mrs. Mann in a soft tone of sympathy.

"I was very ill just before we came here. I had lost my little boy baby—our boy that we were so glad to have. But God sent another gift in this house, or I hardly know what we should have done. Mr. Merrill found work in the molding-mills, and we are very comfortable. Only it seems strange after the crowded city. We had so many friends there. Mr. and Miss Evans have been very kind, and Mrs. Gates, who lives down below. There's quite a garden, and my husband is very fond of that. Yes, I think we shall like it, but I wish it were not quite so grand," with a faint smile.

Mrs. Mann understood that, but she was getting quite at home with the grandeur.

A little girl of three sat in one corner of the porch playing with two dolls, and glancing fur-



tively at the callers. The other two were running around the flower-beds.

Mrs. Mann knew how to reach the heart of her hostess, and began to talk of them. "I have eight," she said, "and this is my oldest daughter."

"Eight! Oh, I hope there are some boys among them. We were so disappointed about ours. He was such a nice baby. And there was a poor little humpbacked thing on the next floor that might as well have gone, her mother wouldn't have grieved over it. I don't see why things have to happen this way. I can't get reconciled."

"And my dear, kind husband met with an accident and had to die soon after the twins were born," replied Mrs. Mann. "I had some years of hard getting along. And then God gave me the oil of gladness for mourning. It sometimes happens so. We cannot understand all His mysteries."

"How *could* you care for eight! It would have killed me."

"We had a little house and garden. And as my husband was in the Civil War I had a pension. Then a wonderful thing happened to me. I try to make it go around. And I wish now you would let me take you out in the surrey. The horse is very gentle and it is a fine afternoon, not too hot."



"Oh, do you mean——" the wan face lighted up.

"My daughter often takes one and another out. It is only thinking about your neighbor. I've had it done to me when I needed it, so I ought to pass it along. It will refresh you."

"I have to stay in so much, for I can't walk. I'm tired after the work is done. Why, I should like to go. How good of you!"

"And you don't need to dress any." Mrs. Merrill had on a nice clean lawn frock. "My daughter can look after the children. She is used to them, you see. We often have in those of the neighbors."

Mrs. Merrill gave a sigh and rose, calling in the oldest girl. "I once read in a book that a woman called her children after their birth month. I thought it a pretty idea. I named May and June that way. But my boy was born in February. That wouldn't have done. What are your boys named?"

Mrs. Mann repeated them.

"Ours was called Eugene, but we couldn't decide on a middle name." She rose and went into an adjoining room and brought out her hat.

"You are so good," she said again. "I rode up from the station in a hack, and I've not been out



since. No one around here has a carriage, but they keep going by. I'm afraid the place is too fine for working-people. I don't think my husband would have come, but his factory shut down and was sold out, and the day he came up here he found work in the molding-mill; he thought the place was lovely, and the garden took his fancy. He takes the trolley in the morning and walks back at night. I think living at Ridgewood would be better, but when you have a house left to you—I didn't suppose we should ever have a home of our own."

"That was a piece of good fortune. Ridgewood is a thriving city. Some day you might exchange. And it was nice to have your husband find employment so readily."

Amaryllis had been making friends with the little girls. They made no demur at their mother's going, for they were in the midst of happenings to the twins.

Mrs. Merrill's spirit rose, and she was captivated with a woman who had been poor and known straits, and as she told her husband afterward, "wasn't a bit set up, though her husband must be very well off."

"She isn't a real invalid," Mrs. Mann said as they were driving homeward, "only low in spirits and grieving all the time for her baby, who it



seems never was very well. And when I found she wouldn't take the clothes as an insult I offered them to her. She had bought nothing for the children, as her expenses had been so heavy. And she would like to have the two older ones go to Sunday school. It is a straight walk down to the chapel. It seems she is handy at making garments. I think, Rilla, we've done a kindly work this afternoon."

It was queer to be without Father and Linn, but some one was coming all the time, and there was a small host out-of-doors. They seemed never to tire of the swing.

Mrs. Mann had a plan to propose. Now that Mrs. Alden was sure not to come back, she thought that the girls might take the two rooms on the opposite side which connected and had good, big closets.

"I think Amaryllis is rather crowded up," she said, "and you are all growing so fast. Then your room will make a splendid guest-chamber."

"Oh, Momsey, that is a first-class plan!" and Primrose almost hugged her mother over in her enthusiasm. "One closet will do for the company, and Rilla will have one for her own self, so she won't hang her frocks over mine!"



"And I shall not find yours three-deep over mine."

"One would think we had tons of clothes. How lucky that we can dispose of those odds and ends, though I want some of the lace on one or two of the cast-off frocks. And Laurel must have that pretty pink one of Rhoda's. It looks just like silk."

"Don't take back all the things, Primrose."

Prim laughed.

They had a gay time moving and spreading their belongings around. Then they arranged the spare-room. Amaryllis had spied an old book-case up in the store-room that had been really handsome in its day. There was a sort of closet below and three shelves above. Dan came in and they looked it over.

"Why, that's some odd kind of walnut. Yes. I could fix that up first-rate, so you could almost see yourself in it, and that round the top is hand-carved. It'll want new glass in the doors."

"I think I will have it done. Then I'll bring my books upstairs and keep them out of Rhoda's way. And I can come up here to study and sew and read too, just as Chan does. Oh, what would we have done in the little old red house!" and Rilla smiled.



Linn's letter was full of superlatives. Chicago was wonderful, only the handsome buildings were all smoked up. And such a hurrying, bustling place! He thought he liked New York better. But Lake Michigan was stupendous, only it seemed a pity there was so little shipping on it, when there was so much room.

After seeing Detroit, which was beautiful, they went to Canada and crossed the bridge in the early morning when the train stopped a while, that the passengers might see the glorious sunrise. He didn't envy Chan nor any one now.

Meanwhile there were many entertaining things for the girls. They went to New York for some shopping, though their mother said the summer would soon be over and there would be fall and winter things to buy. The thick things were made so much prettier than they could be at home by those who were not accustomed to such work. Miss Greatorrex invited them down for a day to luncheon, and Mrs. Bradley matronized them. They were just full of delight. The boys were going to an Association camp for three weeks.

Mr. Evans was over frequently. Indeed, he seemed like a big brother to them.

"I'm glad you went to see that Mrs. Merrill," he said to Mrs. Mann. "Why, the ride almost made a



new woman of her, and your gift roused her ambition. She will send the two girls to Sunday school, and try to come to church. Mr. Merrill seems a very nice, steady kind of man."

"I think the credit belongs to Amaryllis," Mrs. Mann returned with a little flush. "She's so—well—graver than most girls—no, that isn't it quite either—serious I think is the word I want. But she's very sweet and thoughtful. Oh, Mr. Evans, I begin to dread their growing up!"

"I don't think you need. We want good, steady men and women."

Rilla's bookcase was quite a thing of beauty when it was polished up.

"I'd just been lottin' on that myself," said Cap, "but I never thought of it being transmogrified into anything so handsome."

"You can have that oak bureau for your house when you begin to furnish."

Cap sighed, and said: "I wish Abe had a little more push and spunk. There was that cute Connor place for sale, but he was afraid he couldn't manage it. Why, I've saved quite a bit of money myself. I do believe women are smarter than men, for the most part, looking further ahead."

"But we don't want you to go away, Cap. Oh, what would we do!"



"Don't you fret, honey. 'Cordin' to looks, I'll be sure to stay the summer out," and they both laughed.

"Rilla," began Rhoda complainingly, "I think you might give me your little closet downstairs. My books are 'most crowded to death. And I really don't want that doll. I never did care much for dolls."

"Yet you were crazy for it, and teased and teased."

"Well, I was little, and Lal had one. I'd rather drive the pony. And I'm going to your school soon——"

"You can give it away."

"Lal wouldn't give hers away, and she's as old as I am, if she isn't as big. I could put her up in the store-room."

"And a stray mouse might find her and chew off her nose."

Rhoda looked very grave.

"Yes, you may have my closet to spread yourself in."

"Oh, that's good of you! Though I don't see why you should want it when you have all this room."

Rilla laughed a little.

Rhoda went down in a very consequential frame



of mind and began to furnish her new possession. She had quite a store of books. And there was a drawer full of paper and "things." Her pretty work-basket Miss Raynor had given her and sundry tokens from the girls. Then on the top shelf she set out her dishes and her doll with her box of clothes that Prim had covered with some pretty paper.

"I think I'll save her until I have a little girl of my own," she said to herself. "Maybe she'll like dolls. But I'll have to put the carriage up in the store-room."

"What are you doing?" asked Lal, coming in.

"Moving. Rilla has given me her closet, and yours looks like a hurrah's nest. I do wish you were a little neater, Lal! You'll grow up a sloven."

"Well, you are 'way over thother side."

"There isn't any such word as 'thother.'"

"I'll just have words as I like them. I'm glad you've cleared out."

"I haven't said you could have my shelf."

"Well then keep it!" Laurel flounced off.

Rhoda wondered what she could put in to keep possession. But she was afraid of what Rilla would say.

They arranged the spare-room very nicely,



making a lavatory in the alcove. But it seemed very strange to sleep in a room alone, although they left the door open.

Chan admired her bookcase very much, and was glad Rilla was "next door" to him.

"You can come in and get my poets when you want them. And we can talk over things. I wish you were studying German. But I shouldn't like it half so well if I had not been abroad.

Then the two travelers returned, Linn laden with photographs and some queer curiosities, and so full of pleasure that he fairly boiled over. Father and he must come up and see Rilla's room and that of the girls.

"Well, you have made quite a change about, and, Rilla, I am very glad. Now I'll have some of these nice photographs framed for you, as my contribution."

"Oh, thank you," and she kissed him fervently.

"Sometimes we will take a nice journey with your mother—up through Canada, and see Quebec and Montreal. The boys must not be ahead of my little home girl. Oh, Rilla, we'll have nice times in the years to come. We can't help Chan's going away, but you'll stay at home. You won't want to go to college and all that?"

"Oh, I am sure I shall not."



He held her in a warm embrace. She was sweet, and growing wise about one's duties in the greater world. Why somehow she was like a missionary or the settlement workers. Oh, he could never spare her!



## CHAPTER XIII

### KEEPING STORE AGAIN

MEANWHILE Denby had a spasm of astonishment. The younger Miss Beers was to be married. Mr. Holmes, a bookkeeper at the Creamery, a widower with a little boy of six, had been boarding at the "store" for some time. He had managed to distribute considerable attention around and cause no little flutter in the younger portion of the community. But no one was more surprised than Letty Beers when he proposed marriage to her.

She was past thirty, some five years younger than her sister, and better-looking. She was thrifty, industrious, and not extravagant, and he noted that she managed very well with the child, who was really fond of her. Then it was an extremely comfortable home, and Mrs. Beers was an admirable cook.

At first Letty did not even tell her mother, as she was not sure he was in earnest. But when he began to talk of marriage she felt assured.

"Don't let us make any great fuss," he said.



The other time it had been nearly all fuss. "Can't we have the minister over here quietly? I can't get away, so we can't take any tour."

"I won't have that old stick of a Mr. Crawford marrying me!" declared Letty with spirit. "And his son nearly dead with consumption!"

"Well, we could go over to Ridgewood. And then you might have a little supper, or a sort of blowout here, and that would give Denby a notification. Why, it would be fun to surprise the gossips."

Mr. Beers took to the plan very cordially. Phrony thought that as her sister was not likely to get married but once she'd like to make more of it, just to show folks.

Letty went to the city and bought one new silk dress and a new hat and some white gloves. And the next evening there was a sort of wedding supper. Of course, everybody who was invited came and offered congratulations, even if they were rather put out at the choice. But they had a very good time, and the next morning bride and groom went about their daily duties.

"Of course, I'll have to help mother more," said Letty "but I'll find some time for the shop-work if you don't want to give it up, Phrony. Two get along so much better than one."



"And you remember what a fuss they made about your marriage, Mother! I just want to go over and hear Mrs. Beers talk," said Goldie.

"Well, Letty has set a good example to the girls, and I hope she will be happy."

They were much surprised when Mr. Beers came over one morning to see Linn.

"Hain't you had schoolin' enough, Linn, to go into business? I'm in an awful muddle, an' if you could come over a few weeks an' help me out I'd be obliged an' pay you well, for Silsby has been here an' I can't make head nor tail of things. He's gone to learn carpentering now. But I think it was half because he couldn't keep things straight. An' Jim Holmes has two sets of books to keep and said he might do a little by and by. I'll give you five dollars a week if you'll come a month and sort of break in a new boy. You're so neat and tasty about the store, and now trade's gettin' to be rushin'. Do come, Linn."

"Why—it would have to be as Father and Mother said," the boy answered rather startled.

"You could ride over on your wheel in this pleasant weather. Mebbe you could do better at Ridge-wood, but at Masker's—I was in there the other day—they only give their boy four."

"Oh, I can't quite tell. I'm going back to



school in September. I've just been entering high school."

"Beats all that ther's got to be so much schoolin' nowadays. Linn, you're grown to be a nice, big fellow, and ought to be in business for good, 'less your father means to take you in his."

"I don't believe I want that. I may go to college."

"Sho' now! College fellows don't amount to much. Here's the minister's son dying of consumption, and he was some sort of a college man and taught school. Just think it over, Linn. If you'll only come and straighten me out a bit. I wish either of the girls could have taken hold, but they hadn't any head for such things."

Linn said he would see when his father came home. Mother and Rilla had gone out somewhere. Prim was retrimming one of the white frocks, as it could be done on the sewing-machine.

It was rather dull. The Bradley boys were away. Fred Austin was in a confectionery store at Ridgewood, getting four dollars a week. Bert and Charley Morris, of the football team, were off at Cape Cod with some cousins. He rather thought he would like the change and the fun. It did please him to be appreciated and admired, even by Mr. Beers. And—the twenty dollars!



Mrs. Mann made a very emphatic protest. Mr. Mann laughed a little. Linn really was in earnest.

"It wouldn't hurt him, and would be much more entertaining than going to New York with me this hot weather. Linn isn't much of a loungeer."

"But I know Denby people. And they would say——" she paused and flushed.

"That I was tired of so many children and glad to send him out to earn his own living! But they'd find their mistake when he went back to school. He's a bright, eager boy, and just now there is no companionship for him. Oh, I'm not afraid of the talk," and he laughed.

Mr. Beers wrote a very entreating letter, the misspelling showing the advantage of higher education.

"If you'd like to go, Linn, you may. You are old enough now not to take as gospel truth the stories the loungeers in a country store tell, neither will your school training allow you to fall into their uncouth habits of talk. You may hear things said about me that you won't like, but you must not flare up about them. The truth generally prevails in the end."

"It isn't a harmful thing to have different experiences."

"I'm going to take two or three books along, and



they will help me keep a sort of equilibrium. Mr. Evans is starting me in Latin—you know we have it in the first year. I like it, too. It is said to be a good foundation for other languages. I do miss Stuart very much, and Austin was a fine friend. But I'd like to see Denby people, and think what you rescued us from."

The man and boy clasped hands, but neither could put the deep feeling into words.

So on Monday Linn started on his wheel. It was such a fine morning, and the birds were singing dainty strains of second wooing now that they no longer needed to forage for their flock. But Denby *did* have a rather forlorn aspect. Oh, why couldn't men and women try for better living, and not stay forever in the slough of indolence!

Well, the store did look rather discouraging. Everything was in heaps and piles and, yes—dirty.

"I did mean to clear up a little, Linn, but there were so many things to do, and though Jim is away all day there must be a big dinner at night, and Mrs. Beers keeps pretty busy round the house. Letty reckons she isn't going to give up shop-work, and she's a master hand at buttonholes. Jack isn't a mite of trouble, an' you do stop and talk to a child. He can ask the most questions! Now I'll take hold. What'll we tackle first."



"The window, I think. You ought to make a pretty show of it. The Ridgewood folks keep their stores looking nice."

"Well, they can hire help. I got along when there wasn't so much trade."

"But the trade is where you make the money," laughed Linn.

They swept out spiders and flies. Mr. Beers washed the sashes. Then they put in various articles that the sun would not fade, and pretty boxes. They hung up some rather fine chromos, and it looked quite attractive. Then they went at the glass case on the counter and the shelves, piling up goods evenly. Several customers were in, though there was not much trade on Monday morning.

One side was devoted to hardware and country utensils, but they did not attack that. Mrs. Beers had swept up considerably on Sunday, and now it was much improved.

"Joe was such a lazy lout, and he hadn't any more sense 'bout the looks of things than a cow. Linn, where did you get this gumption from. Boys don't generally have it."

"From Mother, I guess," laughingly replied the boy.



He had brought his lunch. Mrs. Beers came in to invite him to share with them.

"Goodness gracious! If you ain't slicked up! Why, you look as fine as a fiddle! I always said to Beers that you were jest like a girl in fixing things. Come in and take a snack with us. I was sure your mother would be too set up to let you come."

"Oh, I brought my lunch. Thank you, though."

She came in with a great slice of pie, presently, followed by the girls and Jack, who was a bright-looking little fellow. Letty was quite enthusiastic about the way things looked, but Phrony contented herself with saying, "A new broom sweeps clean. It gen'ally gets stubby."

The pie was good. Little Jack wanted to stay.

"When he gets too troublesome you jest send him in t'other side."

Linn marked up some of the articles in plainer figures. Jack *did* ask questions. Presently customers came in, mostly out of curiosity, and bought a spool of cotton or a piece of tape, and asked questions about his mother and wanted to know who took Chandler abroad, and if he really meant to sing for a living? One man thought it a mighty poor dependence. He had heard of people losing their voices.





THEY SWEEPED OUT SPIDERS AND FLIES.—*Page 219.*







"And I've heard of people losing their reason," returned Linn.

Amos Meeker looked surprised, and could hardly see the connection.

Phrony settled herself to her sewing after the table was cleared.

"You know several of us said this stepfather business didn't always turn out what is promised. And I s'pose that man is glad enough to have this boy shift for himself. I think Father was foolish to offer him five dollars a week. He would have come for four."

"Well, mebbe not. He's worth two of Joe Silsby."

"I guess two boys would have done more."

"And Joe always had his dinner."

"This bringing lunch was done for show. He won't bring it to-morrow."

What with Jack and customers dickering and pulling things about, Linn was really tired. But when the store was quite full, with two or three gossipy old ladies, Dan drove up with two horses and a load of rosy girls who didn't look very poverty-stricken. They were ushered into the best room, as they came to call on Mrs. Holmes.

The bride was very cordial, quite elated with the compliment, and that "Mother sent her re-



gards to you all." Jack came in to see them and was on his good behavior, and said nothing worse than, "You can't take that big boy home with you, 'cause I like him. Granpop says he's fine."

"No," returned Primrose. "He will come home on his wheel."

"I'll take and hide his wheel. He said you had had two more boys home, so you wouldn't want him."

But they had a lovely call at the Briggs's, and Amaryllis explained that their mother didn't want him to come, but that it was his own doing. And he was to go in the high school in September.

After a week matters settled, and they found Mr. Mann was not a bankrupt, as had been surmised. Linn did get along very well. Some days there was a good trade, some days not much, but everybody admitted that the store was kept quite like those at Ridgewood or Mendham.

Then Linn went at the books, persuading Mr. Beers to get a new ledger and let him copy back to the first of the year. He was a very good penman.

On Saturday Mr. Holmes had a half-holiday and made the acquaintance of the new boy. He had somewhat doubted Mr. Beers' enthusiastic estimate.



"Well, Linn, how did it go?" asked his father.

"Rather funny. I never saw things in such a muss! Mr. Beers lets things go too much. And everybody wonders about Chan and thinks his going abroad was a great piece of foolishness. And that you should take me to Chicago and Niagara! They are dreadfully exercised lest we shall want the money before we die!"

"Then we will have the delightful memories to comfort us."

"How queer people are?"

"We went to that Mrs. Sherwood's," said Rilla, "and she was so nice. They are going to build a pretty new house. Mr. Sherwood has the lumber yard now. And she thinks the Bachmans are the nicest people in Denby among those that are really poor—I mean do not own farms or homes. Mrs. Briggs admires her so much. And there is to be a new house farther up the lane. I think the Creamery will regenerate the old town."

Linn had a little time to study the next week and wrote some exercises. And when he had brought the ledger up to date, and made up ever so many accounts, Mr. Holmes said it was A1. "You are a fine penman. But you are too good for a place like this. I don't see how Pop Beers has managed to make a living, he's so slack. I



know of a place where they would take in a boy like you and give him a first-class chance. I have money in the Creamery, and am booked for here. This place is bound to come up, for it can't go down any lower. But what would you say to a nice business chance?"

"Oh, I'm going back to school, and that will take four years. Then—I don't know——" He had heard so much talk about his stepfather losing everything that it seemed almost boastful to mention college.

"Oh, nonsense! I wouldn't spend four more years when I could do work like that. It's business knowledge a man needs nowadays, not book learning. To go in some first-class house and come up with it is the great thing. You better consider the point."

That was different from the views of his father, who believed in all the education one could get.

"Father," Linn said one evening, "do you call your business—well, I was going to say first-class? Would you put me in it?"

"No, my son. It sort of came to me, and I have worked it up to a certain degree of prosperity. And it is good for Mr. Ross. He is a nice, thrifty man, but he couldn't run a railroad, or bank, or head a



big business. I'm not sure that I could, and I am too far along in life. Several of the inventions I have made money on have been superseded by something simpler and better. No, I hope to place you a little bit higher, where you will carry more weight. Linn, I sometimes meet men that I envy—not their money, but their opportunity—though I'm very happy with you all, but I think there was a little ambition in my make-up that didn't come to light soon enough. And remember that money isn't everything. So don't allow the Creamery man to upset you," and he gave the boy a hug.

Chan and Primrose teased Linn about his money. What was he going to do with it? This week would give him fifteen dollars. He had given it to his mother to keep. Sometimes he almost envied Chan his two hundred dollars out at six per cent interest. Twelve dollars every year! Money *did* make money.

The Grafton boys were coming home. Ball-games were considered. Then a grand picnic was planned. The farmers wanted the children to join them and have a good time. Chan and the girls had spent a splendid day with Father and Mother Kent, who wished they might take Laurel for a grandchild.



Mr. Beers began to feel much worried. Couldn't Linn stay until school really begun? Where could he get another boy?

"No," said Mr. Mann. "You asked for the month. And you need a little recreation. You've done very well, and had a little taste of business, a little experience with people. You'll want to consider the new school and get in trim."

"I'm awfully sorry for Mr. Beers. He lacks concentration, he has too many half-done things that would be good if he followed them out. Of course, Mr. Holmes can't help him; he gets tired with his own books. Why can't girls learn to do this?"

"They do in the cities. And that makes me think of something, Linn. Yesterday a boy came in the place looking for work. His mother was dead, his father had gone off somewhere, and he had been shifting for himself, and really had no home. I don't know his capacity, but some city boy might be glad of a home for a few years until he could do better."

"Oh, Father, if you could find some one like that! I am almost sure Mr. Beers would take him."

"The trouble is to find an honest boy."

The matter took on a new aspect the next week.



George Cooper had been in the paper-mill a year, but did not like it, and his mother came to see Mr. Beers. She heard that Linn Firth wasn't going to stay, and couldn't George have the place?

"I did say I wouldn't take in a Denby boy. They're so trifling and lazy."

"Well, George has worked pretty hard the last year, and he doesn't like it. I think he'd be awful glad of a chance in the store. Oh, Mr. Beers, if you would take him!"

"What do you think of it, Linn?"

"I went to school with George Cooper. Why, he wasn't—bad. And he could spell, which was more than Joe Silsby can do. I don't know much about him since. But if you liked to try him——"

"Oh, Linn, if you could stay two weeks longer?"

"Father doesn't want me to. And I want to get in trim for school."

Mr. Beers sighed. Mrs. Beers tried her most earnest persuasion, and Linn almost yielded, he was so moved, but he put in a plea for George.

"Why, that would be helping your neighbor along, and you might make a good clerk of him."

So George came on Monday morning. He was a good, stout boy, older and larger than Linn.

"I'll try my very best, Mr. Beers, and I know



I'll like store business. It's nice to have only one boss and know he won't swear at you."

Linn felt rather queer to have a clerk, and tried not to order him about in too authoritative a tone. But he found George was not at all thin-skinned.

Another event rather divided the attention of the village. Young Mr. Crawford died quite suddenly. He had seemed much better, but dropped down unexpectedly, and though the community had held rather aloof they proffered immediate sympathy.

"I do hope," said Miss Weed, "that it will give us a chance to get a new minister. We want a young, stirring man who can create an interest. It was a most unfortunate choice."

Linn was inducting George into the necessity of keeping everything clean, having dress-goods folded neatly, keeping small articles in their proper boxes, weighing out nails, and being sure to look at the size of screws, also of putting down charges as soon as the articles were sold, to be transferred to the ledger just at night. "Mr. Beers is always here in the evening," he said. "And, George, you ought to practice writing all you can, and be sure to give the right change. You used to be pretty good in arithmetic."

"I'll do my best, I certainly will. Say, Linn



ain't you fortunate in having such a splendid stepfather! People used to say——"

"He's better than any own father in Denby, and knows more," fired up Linn. "No one can say a word against him. And he loves us children just as if they were his very own."

"I wish my mother'd had such luck," sighed George.

The children were still the envy of Denby, but Mrs. and Mr. Mann had the warmest endorsement of the Beers family. Letty, too, had grown really fond of Linn, and he was little Jack's idol.

"But he's making a big mistake in spending all those years in school when he could be pushing his way in business. He would make a first-class bookkeeper and cashier in a bank if he holds on to the trusty ideas he has now. That's the sort of boys men are looking out for," was the opinion of Mr. Holmes.

"Oh, Linn, you'll come over and take tea with us now and then, won't you," pleaded Mrs. Beers. "You almost belong to us."

Mrs. Briggs and Grandma laughed privately at the conversion of Denby on the subject of Mrs. Firth's marriage, and all agreed that Mr. Mann was an unusual person, a man out of a thousand.

Mr. Crawford did not resign. No marriageable



woman coveted him, for he kept to his daughter and her three children. Then they learned that his income died with him, and no one had any thought of him after that.



## CHAPTER XIV

### FUN FOR YOUNG AND OLD

THE boys were all home again, having a good time comparing notes, but they agreed that Chicago and Niagara stood rather at the head.

Farmer Kent came in again. Their picnic would be in the first week in September. They would have the band from Summerville, some swings and "high-jumps," he said, laughing. Then they wanted the boys' baseball club, and the men of forty years ago would show how they played. And the young fellow must speak that splendid piece about "striking for your altars and your fires, and your native land." There wouldn't be any "hay-riggin' frolics," but dancing and plenty of good things to eat.

Linn went to hunt up Stuart and the ball club. It did seem quite funny that in a way they should be pitted against the old fellows.

"Why, I think it will be awfully jolly. I'm ready," declared Austin.

"And I, too," said Charley Lane. "We must



practice up a little with all the new points. Why, it will be a grand wind-up for vacation."

"It's rather funny," began Prim, when she returned from a kind of neighborhood sortie, "that the Read girls should have started the other picnic just for a kind of girls' frolic. And we did have a gay time with those farmer-folks. Why, I think *we* as a family must have made a deep and lasting impression. And now we are to go as invited guests. Ought we to take our own refreshments?"

"Oh, them farmer-folks provide bountifully. Polly and her lover—he was then—went to one and they had a grand good time," said Cap. "Northeast people are close as the skin, and wouldn't spend a day pleasin' lest they might have to go to the poorhouse in the end. But I hope you'll all go."

"And you, Cap. Wouldn't you like it?" asked Mrs. Mann. "You haven't had a real vacation this summer."

"But I've had rides around, and lots of good times."

"I hardly know how the summer has gone," continued Mrs. Mann.

The boys hustled. They hunted up their compeers and played ball to get their hand in. The mothers took it as quite a compliment that they



should be specially invited, and there were few dissenting voices.

And a grand time they had. The two surreys and the pony carriage took them all, even to Cap. It did look like pleasuring. There were swings and hammocks, and long tables with seats on both sides. The farmer-folk had turned out splendidly. There were many old people in the attire of bygone years, looking like some quaint picture. There were still more younger people, two or three brides in their wedding gowns, and some rather bashful young fellows. But the Grafton people were made very welcome. Mrs. Kent was very glad to meet them, and she looked quaintly sweet.

The band was not to come until three. First they must have the "pieces," and Linn followed Stuart, who had been enthusiastically applauded. Chan sang for them, and some choruses followed, and even if the voices were not trained, they sounded well in the open air. The wit of the farmer contingent gave them a very funny sketch, ending by inviting them all to the repast. And when they had recovered from the feast the boys gave them a really well-played ball-game, and were heartily cheered.

Then some sunburned, stalwart farmers played a game of old-fashioned "round-ball." It was



much simpler, but they played with a zest, sitting down on the grass afterward to talk it over.

"I ain't played in a dog's age," said one of them, "and it tuckers me out. I like to read of the great matches they have in the city, but I never can make head nor tail of them. And the men get paid for playin', so it ain't for love, nor for fun. I like the fun of the thing, leastways I did when I was young. Now and then we old fellows have a bout and make b'lieve we're young again! My, how things change, but most of us keep on the same old trot. 'Tain't good enough for the boys, and they go off to the cities. Soon there won't be any real farmers, and everything will be done by machine."

The little pony and its driver elicited much admiration. Rhoda was very proud, and ready to give the children a treat. Some of the mothers were afraid to trust it.

"For it doesn't seem as if that little thing could draw any load. Its legs are slim as a young colt's, and what funny short steps it takes!"

But Dolly threw up her head and trotted along as if she enjoyed surprising everybody. One young man asked Rhoda what she would take for her pony. He said that he had never seen one just like it.



"You couldn't buy it," she replied, with a tremendous air of ownership.

"It isn't all hers," put in Tip. "Father gave it to her and Laurel, and partly to me, 'cause I had wanted a goat. But I can ride Bonnie now, and drive her, too. I like her better than any little make-believe thing."

"Then I stand a poor chance," was the young man's laughing reply.

"Well, you couldn't get in the basket. You wouldn't know what to do with your legs."

He was a tall young fellow, and he joined Tip this time in the laugh, but he said:

"We'll go and hunt up Bonnie."

"But you can't buy her, either. She belongs all to Father, and he rides her now and then."

"Well, I have one nice horse, that big gray over yonder. You wouldn't dare ride him."

"Would he kick and throw me?"

"No, he's a mighty good-tempered fellow. Come and let me lift you on."

Tip didn't quite want to when he came nearer the horse, which was above the average in size. But he didn't like to show the white feather.

"Why, I'd have to get a stepladder," said Tip, hanging back.

Mr. Joe Alston picked him up, and there he was,



feeling as if he were on an elephant. He reached out one small arm.

"I'll hold you. Slowly, Ben, show off a few of your best steps."

Long steps they were, and Tips' heart almost thumped, but he shut his teeth tightly.

"Well, you have some pluck. I thought you'd be afraid. Ben and I take tremendous gallops. I've had him since he was a colt; broke him myself. You come to love a horse very much. There's your sister with three little girls. Any of them the other owner?"

"No, that's Laurel. She's there by Mrs. Kent, leaning on her shoulder. She's a good deal littler, and she's a twin, and she's been afraid of almost everything. We had such a pretty little dog once, only it belonged to a girl who was sick, and she once lived in our house, and left him there a spell. But we had to keep him out in the barn, she screamed so when he tried to play with her. Then there's Pilot, and he's splendid. She doesn't mind so much now. I'm not afraid of dogs."

"It isn't well to be too familiar on first acquaintance. Let us go and find her."

He had lifted Tip down, and now tethered Ben again, who went to munching grass. They walked



over to the group. He was acquainted with the Kents. Mrs. Mann and several others sat around. Tip told of his exploit while the introductions were going on.

"Oh, Tip!" cried his mother.

"Why, I wasn't a bit afraid."

"I held him on, as we had no saddle. But many a time in my boyhood I've ridden bareback. Mrs. Mann, that boy with the beautiful voice is your son, and one of the ball-players? How many more?"

"Five girls. These two, the older ones, and two more somewhere about——"

"And this one I think I'll take home with me," said Mrs. Kent.

"Oh, I saw the one with the pony-carriage, but I couldn't make a trade with her. Doesn't this one drive?"

"I think she's rather timid."

"Oh, you are the folks Cap Terry lives with," said Joe with sudden interest. "Why, I've heard about you. One of her married sisters lives not far from us; smart woman, too. I had my eye on one of them once. Queer old chap, their father! But they are all going to make first-class wives."

"Cap is a fine girl, upright and trustworthy,



and not afraid of work. I don't know what we shall do when we lose her," said Mrs. Mann.

"And she engaged to that slow-witted Abe Mulford. She could do a sight better. I've half a mind to cut him out. Mrs. Mann, don't ever think there are too many children. My mother grieves because there were only two of us, and Seth's gone up in Canada raising wheat and stock. I'd go in a minute, but Father's rather rheumatic and Mother's heart would break if I went away. We have a fine farm, too. Mrs. Kent can tell you."

"Yes, and Joe's a nice fellow, but he ought to have a wife," was the rejoinder.

"You see, most of the girls don't like farming. They want to be right in town. It is rather lonesome, but not as hard as it used to be. I've had water put in the house and set-tubs and all that, and a furnace to keep us comfortable in cold weather. One might as well spend a little money as to leave it behind when he's dead."

The band was tuning up. Now the black fiddler who could call off figures shouted out, "Ladies an' gemmen choose pardners!"

There was a a scurrying round. Joe bowed and was off. Running against Cap Terry he asked her.

"I ain't done much dancing of late, only with



the children. But land, farmer-folks stick pretty well to the old things! With pleasure, Mr. Alston."

The farmers' picnic always wound up with a dance. There were not a great many young men, and some of them were out speeding their horses. But it brought a return of youth to the middle-aged with the good old tunes, mostly fitted for square dances.

"See here," said Fred Austin, "can't we get up one dance? You, Stuart, and Lane, and Linn. Then find four girls."

The girls were easily found. Stuart seized on Primrose, and the Read girls were ready. They found a place. The grass had been run over with the lawn-mower and was very even.

The older ones danced with a will, and the air was gay with the strains of "Life Let Us Cherish," "Money Musk," "Oh, Susannah," and a dozen other old, inspiriting tunes.

"It makes one long to be young again," declared Mrs. Kent. "Why, every week or so we'd have a frolic round at some of the houses and a sleigh-ride. When we'd stop at the tavern—they called them that in the old days—they'd have a dance and some refreshments. But they began early and went home by midnight. And, I de-



clare! There's Father footing it as if he wasn't more'n twenty! Curious how ministers began to preach against dancing and tried to break it up. And now some of the home papers are pleading for it and saying it ought to be taught in schools. I like to see it. And Primrose is just full of it."

Primrose was in demand. Even Amaryllis was persuaded to join. And there were jigs that were merry enough, and fisher's hornpipe, and everything was real dancing, not languid walking around.

How short the day had been! The women made some fresh coffee and tea. The musicians packed away their instruments. Horses were harnessed up. One of the committee, a fine-looking man, stood at the table.

"Friends and neighbors," he began, "I want to say that I think we haven't had such a good time in years. I want to thank our guests from Grafton who have added largely to our pleasure. We took a great fancy to them when they were over here on their own picnic last year. Especially the boys. We've had a feeling that Grafton people—well, that they were rather grand and looked down on plain farmers. But they're raising some fine boys, and I hope they'll grow up first-class men. And we thank you one and all for a splen-



did time, and here's hoping we may repeat it next year."

Joe Alston started the cheering, in which the women joined, and the air was full of delight, making echoes from the woods. And then began disbanding and most cordial good-bys, even if the tones had a sound of regret.

Cap was in the big surrey with the children.

"I've had the time of my life," she declared. "I can't think which was best, this or Central Park. That was finer, but this was the most fun. I didn't expect to meet so many that I knew. You see, it come of visiting my sister now and then. And those big farmers are not the stingy kind, like the Northeast folks who'd skin a flea for the hide and tallow."

The girls laughed at that.

"And it's queer," said Amaryllis, "but Denby people are different, again. Of course, nations are different, but why only a few miles should make such a change I can't understand."

"And what there is inside of people that makes them queer," rejoined Goldie.

"And not wanting people to have a good time."

"That's Pop to a T," said Cap. "You must be working and slaving and pinching here and there, and going about with a long face for fear you'll



come to the poorhouse. And I dare say the sun will shine round the poorhouse, and when its nice and warm you can go out and sit in it. Can't be always cloudy weather."

They had a very simple supper. Mr. Mann admitted that it was a first-class picnic, and he wondered people didn't have more of them, they left such a good friendly memory.

Cap didn't go over home on Sunday. She didn't want to hear Pop's tirade about grown people spending their time over such foolishness. But Abe Mulford came, and she set a dainty supper out in the kitchen. And Abe must needs keep his spoon in his cup and then tip it over. She did wish he wasn't so clumsy.

And now he was getting tired of the Creamery. He thought he could do something better than milk cows night and morning.

"Anything else in view?" she inquired rather tartly.

"Well, no. And there's the fussin' over the milk. It's the same old thing, day in and day out."

"Well, that's the way with all work."

"I'd like a little farm of my own."

"Then you must hustle and get one."

"'Tain't so easy as you'd think."



"Well, I know a good bit about farming, though Father never gave us girls any credit."

Of course, Abe was young yet. The other girls had done fairly well.

Cap and Amaryllis were talking over some of the people as they sat on the porch Sunday evening. Rilla kept thinking how many times Mr. Alston had danced with Cap, and that he was really a well-bred man, kindly of heart, and good to his father, as every one said.

"Cap," said Rilla. "I wish you weren't engaged to Mr. Mulford."

"Well, now, Miss Rilla! I've had some such thoughts myself. It's along of coming here to live. And we girls didn't have it very nice at home with Pop growling and wishing we were boys and could help along. He'll see what the boys will do. And you couldn't go out for a bit of fun with any degree of comfort. So we picked up lovers as soon as we could. And when I heard you wanted a girl over here, and big Lide was tellin' how nice it was with stationary tubs and a man about to do chores, I thought I'd try for the place and earn a bit of money and get married. But I sha'n't be in any hurry. Don't you fret. Maybe you'll grow up and be married first. You'll make a lovely wife; you're so like your mother."



"Oh, I don't think I shall be married. Mother will want me to help with the children. And there's so much to learn and to do."

"But you won't have to take the brunt of house-keeping. You'll learn the piano and the nice things, and you're a lady, Miss Rilla. I don't believe one of the girls can come up to you."

Amaryllis laughed, and squeezed Cap's arm.

They had hardly gotten over the picnic when Mr. Gwynne took them by surprise with a new proposal for Chandler. Miss Griswold was partly answerable for it, at least she had arranged the possibilities of it.

There were two bids for Chan. St. Jude's had heard of his fame, but Miss Griswold had spoken first. The salary and the duties were the same. It would necessitate his being away from home over Sunday.

"I don't believe his parents would consent," Mr. Gwynne had said.

"But think it over. Most parents would jump at the chance. And why shouldn't he have the opportunity to make a reputation, since music is to be his profession?"

"You see, he would have to be away from home over Sunday. And we must trust him to



some one. I can't run any risks. It is not as if I could keep him under my wing."

"Oh, I have that all fixed," and she smiled. "Mother and I have talked it over. You must let him come to us. You know Mother has had a good deal of experience in the care of voices and general health. And she longs to see Chandler. I have talked so much about him that she is quite in love with him. He can come down on Saturday and join the boys at their choir practice, and study his anthem. The signor will coach him in that. You know, we can begin the week beforehand. Then after Sunday dinner he shall have a rest. I'll promise not to exploit him to callers. So he will be fresh for the evening. There, can you think up anything better?"

"Well, you have it all planned out! And I certainly would trust your mother. I think the offer too good to be passed by. He is in good health and loves to sing. He will do it in the little country church and miss some excellent training. I should consent in a moment if he were mine. I am afraid it will be hard work persuading his mother. While Mr. Mann will be just as loth to give him up, he is a man and has the broader outlook. Anyhow, Mr. Kingston may make his proffer, and I will go armed with that."



"And, oh, be most persuasive about us! I'm only afraid Mother will want to keep him all the time."

This was Mr. Gwynne's great errand, and he begged an interview with the heads of the house. The children might play duets on both pianos, and make any noise they liked.

"I'm afraid it is about Chan," said Primrose. "This time Mr. Gwynne will take him to Russia."

The salary really amazed Mr. Mann, though he knew such a voice was in demand. From October until June, Sundays and some of the grander church festivals. Then he laid before them in a very attractive manner Miss Griswold's proposal, which he endorsed heartily.

"Oh, I couldn't give up so much of him," cried his mother. "And—and he doesn't need the money."

"It is not so much for the money as to gain a standing in the musical world. We are not to bury our talents."

"But there must be so many boys in New York who really need the money. Oh, Mr. Gwynne, can't you find some one? And not to have Chan on Sunday! He's so fond of Sunday school and Mr. Evans. And he was away so long. Oh, I don't think I could spare him."



"And what does Mr. Mann say?"

"Oh, Mr. Gwynne, you have been so generous to us all——"

"But this is not any generosity on my part. Another church stands ready to bid for him. He won both parties by the Christmas eve anthem; he has not been pushed forward. I know he will not really need the money, but it is the standing and reputation for the future. This will be his profession, and I think God ordained him for it. It is my business to entertain and forward the musical world, it is true, but in this case I should not be selfish about it; I love the boy too well. I want him to stand in the front rank unless God should see fit to take away his unusual gift. You must give it your earnest consideration and decide if you are willing to make some present sacrifice for the boy. Oh, you need not feel afraid he will ever outgrow your love and tenderness."

He reached over and took Mr. Mann's hand. The stepfather remembered when he said to himself with a great joy that the child wouldn't ever need to go round the world singing for a living. The little boy who had gone so cheerfully to the hospital, that he might be of more service to his mother in the years to come. And he felt it was a golden opportunity.



"Now, you must think it over and talk it over by yourselves," and Mr. Gwynne rose. "I must see the children a few moments, and I shall be glad if you will let Dan drive me down to that eleven o'clock train. I have to meet some parties early to-morrow morning. And I will see you at two in the afternoon and get your verdict."

The children declared he must stay all night. They could not be satisfied with such a stingy visit. And there was the funny picnic to talk over, and the old farmers dancing, and school, and everything!

They made him promise to come again very soon.

"Is it about Chan?" asked Rilla, reading trouble in her mother's face as she slipped her hand in that of the one so dear.

"Yes, dear. We shall all know to-morrow."

Bessy Mann tried to be her usual self until she went to their room. Then she said with a half sob:

"We must give him up for all time. If Mr. Gwynne had never heard him——"

"Some one else would. But we do not give him up."

"Yes, he will go out into the world and get flattered and weaned away. We shall be so different—we shall be just every-day people. And when you read about great ladies going down to



these wonderful singers and forgetting everybody else——”

Bessy was crying. A wave of motherly jealousy swept over her soul and blinded her to the future. Mr. Mann had a keen pang, but he trusted the boy's love. And he was not going out very far into the world. She was thinking of the Griswolds and how another mother would come to love her boy. She had never been jealous of Nurse Jane, but this was different. If Chan would only refuse!

But somehow they all thought it so fine that he should be asked to sing in a fine city church and have a real salary. Delight was written in every line of Chan's face, and Bessy felt that she must yield.

Mr. Gwynne took Mr. Mann to call on the Griswolds the next day, and they met Mr. Kingston, who was waiting rather impatiently to have the matter settled, delighted that he had won the remarkable voice for his church. So they arranged all the preliminaries. Bessy was very quiet about it, and was glad in her heart when Mr. Evans expressed some dissent on account of his youth.

“Mother doesn't like it,” Amaryllis said to him as they stood on the porch. “So I shall have to find ways to make it up to her. I think she missed him so much when he went abroad. I don't know



why we all love Chan so dearly. Linn is good, and the most generous-hearted boy alive, but Chan—and we talked so much about him when he was in the hospital and were almost afraid——”

“Chan is a lovely boy, and your mother’s heart is full of affection for him, but she will come to see presently that these great gifts ought not to be withheld from the world. And I think you will comfort her in your sweet devotion to her. You have so many kindly and tender ways, and you will keep growing nearer together. You must both broaden out,” and he smiled down in the sweet girl face.

Chan came home full of delight. Mr. Kingston had been very nice to him, and the ladies lovely.

“And, oh, Mother, Mrs. Griswold has such a sweet face and brown eyes, but they’re not quite as beautiful as yours and are not as full of smiles. They’ve a queer, pretty place, and you go up in an elevator. There are ever so many families in the house. And Mr. Kingston begged me to tell about the birthday of the Countess, and I sang the two German songs for him and several other things. And I’m going to dress like the choir boys. They look fine in their cottas. And that beautiful church! Oh, I wish Mr. Evans could



have a vested choir! Aren't you glad God gave me this lovely voice to praise Him with?"

His arms were about her neck and his soft, young face pressed against hers.

Oh, she must be glad and thankful, even if the pang was still at her heart!

They were all busy enough after that, thinking about school and wondering if they would like the new classes. Mrs. Mann went over to enter Rhoda and Tip, who was really to be Harrison Firth. He wasn't so very enthusiastic, for if he could have a week more he was quite sure he could perfect his flying-machine. His first trial had been a failure. But he would have much larger wings with lots of folded paper that the wind could blow about. And he would use his arms like paddles, and he might put a kite to it. He had studied kites a good deal and was quite an adept in flying one. But he wanted wings that he could manage like the birds.



## CHAPTER XV

### WINGS THAT WOULDN'T FLY

FOUR girls came trooping home. Their mother sat on the front porch sewing.

"O dear!" Prim had been swinging her hat by the strings, and now threw herself down on the step. "I wish Rhoda might have stayed at Miss Raynor's another year. There's such a string of us! It doesn't make as much difference when we walk, but sitting in the car in a row! I'm glad we don't look alike!"

"Hush," reproved her mother. Rhoda was just behind. Now the child made one spring.

"Oh, Mother, it was just splendid! There were so many children, and I answered two questions none of the others could. And, Mother, there's a pretty silver medal that you can wear a whole week if you have been just right in everything. And I've made such a nice friend already; her name is Lucy Gaines. We just talked about ourselves at recess, and her mother keeps two maids, besides a nurse girl for the babies, who are twins, and that's funny



enough! One is a boy and the other is a girl, and she thinks they're lovely. I wish Lal had been a boy. I told her about Lal, and that she wasn't smart enough to go to public school yet."

"You'd have made the best boy," said Goldie.

"And there's a boy who has something the matter with his spine and has to use a crutch. And I told her all about Chan going to the hospital, and how straight he was, and that he was engaged to sing in a big New York church for real money and that he'd been to Europe and Germany and——"

"Oh, Rhoda, what a gossip you are!" declared her mother. "There'll be nothing left to tell tomorrow."

"Oh, yes, there will," said the child earnestly. "But I must go and study my lessons, for I'm bound to have that medal the first one if I can."

"Don't go in the play-room; take the library. Amy and Laurel are there."

"O dear! I said to Lucy she wouldn't like twins so well if she had one for an own sister."

"For shame, Rhoda!" exclaimed her mother.

Goldie and Prim laughed until they almost fell over.

"I do wonder what makes Rhoda so different," said Amaryllis in a troubled tone.



"She's so strong, so irrepressible—it has to come out," explained Primrose. "I suppose she does seem smart, and she gets praised a good deal outside of the family. Miss Ford, the teacher, said to me, 'What a bright little sister you have, Primrose.'"

"If she only wouldn't gossip so!" rejoined the mother. "And how did school go with you?"

"So-so," and Prim gave a nod.

"It was rather up and down," was Goldie's comment. "I was glad to see the girls, and we thought the farmers' picnic had been the best thing we ever went to."

"And, like Rhoda, I must go to study," said Amaryllis. "I wish I had some of her gift."

Prim sprang up and gave her a hug.

"I wouldn't have you changed the least little atom!" she cried. "You're the goodest and sweetest, even if you never get in the high school."

Linn was quite late. There was so much to talk over with the boys, and there were the new lessons. "But I tell you I'm mighty glad I took up Latin in my spare moments. It puts me 'way ahead," he declared cheerfully.

Chan had spent nearly the whole day with the signor, but he wasn't tired out, and their father had a fine evening listening to them.



Laurel and Amy had enjoyed their day as well. Amy was delighted with the companionship, but Laurel was a bit bashful. Still they were pretty fair scholars.

The first of October came very soon, the mother thought, when Chan started off with his father after many good-by kisses. And a pang went to her heart when the father returned alone.

Chan was a little strange at first. He sat in the front row with the boys, feeling very reverent in his cotta. The church was well filled and the congregation very attentive. Of course, the lovely voice, while not loud, was penetrative in its sweetness. The boy was enjoying it to the full.

Mr. Kingston had chosen for the offertory anthem, "How Beautiful upon the Mountains!" because he thought the lad would feel more at home in it, and because it was elevating. Chan kept his eyes on the music, though he held his head up straight and seemed quite unconscious of his own person. Several members of St. Jude were there and were deeply impressed.

"Oh, Chandler, you did finely," Miss Griswold exclaimed. "And it was so sweet and lofty! That strain, 'Thy God reigneth,' seemed like an answer to a waiting crowd."

They had a delicate luncheon, the lady read to



him until he was drowsy and took a nap, which freshened him up for the evening, when the church was crowded. But, as Chan had said at home, he was singing to the Lord just as any other worship.

And though there were several callers Miss Griswold sent him to bed, but he declared he wasn't a bit tired. "I do hope I pleased Mr. Kingston," he said.

Mr. Evans missed him very much. He often walked home with the children after Sunday school, and now he had to tell Amaryllis about some new people who had moved over from Ridgewood and had a rather delicate daughter who was to live out-of-doors as much as possible. "And when your mother drives around on her errands of mercy and kindness, I wish she would take her. I think it would do her good to know you all. You are my right-hand people, but I hope I shall not impose upon you."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid."

Mrs. Mann was getting to be a favorite in Grafton, and as for the children, no one thought of their being wild Arabs, though Primorse did break out now and then.

"I suppose we do owe some consideration to our neighbors," Mr. Mann said. "They are very



cordial about inviting us out, and an evening at the Brenners' is really a treat.

"They have traveled so much that their descriptions are almost as good as seeing a thing for yourself. And they never talk down to you, as if it was a great favor. And the Bradleys were among our first friends. Then the men are taking more interest in this pretty suburb. I saw at the last common council meeting at Ridgewood that they were discussing the need of a nice primary school here and a branch library. A few of the very aristocratic may object, but we ought to have both. Still, with the children, I do enjoy the evenings at home. They will grow up too soon."

The mother gave a soft sigh.

The two little girls liked their school very much. Miss Raynor had refused several of the larger boys, as she thought their rough ways rather detrimental.

Gladys Chedister longed very much to go to a real school. Mrs. Chedister had softened somewhat in her prejudices.

"And to think of that little Chandler getting such a salary in a big New York church! Amaryllis is certainly a very ladylike girl, and they *are* very nice about inviting you to take a drive. I do



suppose Mrs. Mann's people must have been above most of the Denby folks, and they say the children's father was an educated man."

"And I do certainly consider Mr. Mann a broad-minded, intelligent person, with a great fund of common sense. He studies the children's welfare more earnestly than many own fathers. That Linn is a fine boy," said Mr. Chedister.

"But I shouldn't have been willing for him to go in that common country store. It *did* make a talk," continued his wife.

"It was the boy's wish, and I think it was plucky after having had that nice journey. Most boys would have been too high in their own estimation to accept such a position. And Mr. Mann wants him to go to college when he is through the high school. He thinks a good education will be more than any money he may leave to the children. And he does enjoy the present with them."

"Still, it will be especially nice for the girls to have something, unless he means them for business as well," Mrs. Chedister said rather sharply. "Five of them! Well, it will take a good deal to go round."

"I've often wished Gladys had a brother."

"Well—if he was a nice, tractable sort of boy," in a half-reluctant fashion.



Rhoda came home from school overflowing with gratification.

"I'm the second girl to win the medal, and I'm among the new scholars and had to study up new ways. Teacher praised me before the whole school. Just see!"

It was a really pretty medal with "The Reward of Merit" engraved on one side, and a tiny view of the school on the other. It had been presented by a lady who had taught the class for several years.

"I am glad you have been such a good scholar," said the mother.

"And it's ever so much nicer than Miss Raynor's. After all, that is only a little A B C school."

"You must do it justice, Rhoda. You learned a good deal there."

Tip did not fare so well. Getting out of old tracks into new ones wasn't at all agreeable. Some of the boys played tricks upon him, and he was not quick enough to make a return. His head was full of his wings, and his pads were interspersed with diagrams that puzzled his teacher.

"It looks like a sum, Harrison, with all these figures. What does it mean?"

"Well, I can't tell you just now. I haven't worked it all out yet."



"Are your sums finished?"

"Not quite," hesitatingly.

"Then you must go at those."

Tip discussed it with Dan.

"You see, these papers will be folded like a fan. And there will be several layers of them. They catch the air as I flap my arms, just as wings do. And this thing will be a jacket that I'll put over my arms."

"They're talking about airships, and it strikes me they're queer things. But you will have to use a sort of machine, something like a balloon," suggested Dan.

"I want mine all to myself. I want to have it so that I can pull it off and put it on just as easy as a jacket."

"But I think your body will be too heavy to rise. The bird's body is adapted to his wings."

"Oh, you'll see."

Tip made his first essay back of the barn. He flapped and flapped, but could not raise himself an inch.

"I ought to stand upon something," he mused. "Then I have a start. And the paper feathers ought to be longer."

Dan admitted that it was very ingenious. It



was best to let Tip convince himself, so he only gave a little advice now and then.

There was one splendid windy October day. Dan had taken the girls over to Denby.

The boys were planning for a baseball ground and forming a club. So there was no one to make comments.

Tip would start from the chicken-house and go with the wind. He went up the ladder and then slipped into his wings, which were to be held tight to the upper arm by a band of rubber, and another midway between elbow and wrist. He could hardly balance himself in the wind. Then he raised up, gave two or three flaps that nearly tumbled him over, and cried, "Hurrah!"

The wind and the beating of the wings did buoy him up for a short distance. Then alas! in spite of the most vigorous efforts he began to descend. He kicked out with force, he flapped with all his might, but in vain, and down he came, on one foot first, then on his side.

"But I know I *can* do it. You don't succeed at first—hardly ever. Ouch! My ankle's hit a stone, I guess. I shouldn't think Dan would leave one in the grass."

Then he began to divest himself of his jacket. But every move did something to his foot. There



was nothing to take hold of, but he managed to get up on one knee.

"Oh, I do wonder if it's broken!" and he began to cry.

There was no one in sight. Presently he tried to stand up, but that foot seemed to turn over, and down he went. Could he make any one hear? He screamed and called. Then Cap looked down the garden path.

"O my!" and she ran swiftly forward. "Oh, Tip, have you had a bad fall? Why—what's all this?" glancing at the discarded wings.

"Don't make such a racket! Yes, I fell, but I flew a little way. I don't know whether my foot is broken off, but it feels loose and hurts like sixty. O dear!"

She raised him with her hands beneath his arms.

"Oh, I can't stand on it! And it hurts just awful!"

She took him up in her arms and carried him to the back porch and called his mother. Now that Tip had given way, he cried in good earnest.

Mrs. Mann came. Cap was taking off his shoe and stocking. But it was so tight about the ankle now that he fairly howled.

Mrs. Greer came in to inquire what had happened.





"OH, TIP, HAVE YOU HAD A BAD FALL?"—Page 262.







"We ought to have the doctor," said Mrs. Mann. "Cap, you may just find Dr. Wardlaw, if you go immediately."

"I'll go," proposed Mrs. Greer, and she started at once.

"We might bathe it with the witchhazel. Oh, it's dreadfully swollen! Tip dear, don't cry quite so hard."

"But if it is too bad the doctor will have to cut it off."

"I think it isn't so bad as all that. How did you come to fall?"

"Why, I was—I *did* fly a little, and then the wind—O dear, it hurts!" and he laid his head on his mother's bosom, while Cap kept bathing the ankle.

Mrs. Greer returned with the doctor. If it had hurt before, Tip thought now his foot was surely coming off.

"Oh, Tip, don't scream so hard," said his mother. "The neighbors will think you are being murdered."

"Yes, it hurts tremendously," said the doctor. "If it were being cut off, they would give you ether and you would not feel the hurt. There are no broken bones, but it is a very bad sprain. We'll bandage it and keep it wet with some soothing



stuff, but it will be quite a while before you will walk on it. Now where shall I carry you? ”

“ Into the library,” replied Mrs. Mann. When they had settled him there, the doctor asked how the accident had happened.

Tip was rather unwilling to tell, but between them all the story came out.

“ Well that *is* an idea! You’ll have to figure on it some time, I think. But it *is* ingenious for a little chap like you. I’m sorry you should meet with such a mishap.”

“ I’m sure I can do it some time. If I could put little balloons in a row——”

“ I wouldn’t bother about it now,” said the doctor with a smile.

“ How soon will it be well? ”

“ Oh, in three weeks or so. It is sometimes as bad as a break. And the ankle is a rather bad place.”

“ Three weeks! ” cried Tip in dismay. “ And can’t I walk any, or must I hop on one foot.”

“ You must neither hop nor walk unless you have a crutch. This will be a lesson in patience. And you can be planning out the improvement in the wings.”

“ Oh, it hurts again! The bandage pinches. Can’t you loosen it? ”



"No, my boy, it is best as it is. Let your mother wet it again. Now, you must be courageous and patient."

Mrs. Mann sat by her little boy and read him a story. Her voice was so soothing that he fell asleep in spite of the pain.

Chandler came home first. He was not enamored of vacations, but liked to keep on with his lessons. Linn was over at the Bradleys', Prim and Goldie had gone out to tea. Rhoda was out driving with Dan, so there was a very quiet house until Mr. Mann's return, when the family began to assemble.

Cap brought in a small table and arranged Tip's supper, and Chan invited himself for company. They had a rather merry time, and talked back and forth with the others. Mr. Mann quite admired the little boy's pluck and ingenuity.

Later in the evening Tip inquired how he was to get upstairs at night.

"I'll carry you," said his father.

"I think I will have a cot brought down into our room," declared his mother. "You may want something in the night."

"Oh, that will be fine," returned Linn. "For if he cried I shouldn't know what to do with him."

"And it pains awfully at times," appended Tip.



"Why can't it stop for good instead of just for a few minutes?"

"That's to give you a rest."

"Will it pain all day to-morrow?"

"There'll be a good deal of pain in it," said his father. "And you must be a brave boy."

Presently the evening passed. Mr. and Mrs. Greer came in and were very much interested in Tip's experiment, but sorry for the disaster. Then they dispersed. Tip's ankle was bathed anew, and he was disrobed and placed in the cot and kissed by them all.

"And you'll be nice and well to-morrow," said Laurel hopefully.

Dan was the only one who had really scolded. "For I told you not to try when I wasn't here," he said rather crossly.

Tip winced a little as his mother undressed him, but he declared he was very glad to sleep in her room and so near to them all. But it was some time before slumber visited him. His ankle *did* pain, and he gave long sighs. And several times he shrieked as he went to turn over. But toward morning he fell into a profound slumber.

Mrs. Mann begged the children to be as quiet as possible so as to let Tip sleep as long as he would. They were all rather astonished to think it



would be so long before he would be able to get about.

"I almost forgot to mention this—we were all so concerned in Tip's mishap. Mrs. Alden was in to-day with her new husband. He is a nice-appearing man, a regular farmer, and he said he felt already that he knew us all and would be glad to meet us personally. They came down to the Rosses' on Saturday, and if it is convenient they will come up to-morrow with me."

"Oh, it will be just splendid to see Mrs. Alden again, only it seems queer to have her married," exclaimed Prim.

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Mann in answer to her husband's proposal. "We shall all be glad to see her and Mr. Benson."

"She's changed some; grown stouter. And she does look quite like a farmer's wife."

"Is that very different?" asked Amaryllis.

Her father laughed. "I can't quite describe it, but she doesn't look quite like city folks."

"Well, we shall all be glad to see her," said Prim.

Mrs. Mann partly turned and listened.

"That is Tip, I know."

"Cap, will you go up and tell him I will come up with some breakfast."



But Tip came down in Cap's arms attired in his bathrobe.

"I couldn't get on any clothes," he began, "'cause I couldn't stand on one foot and do anything with both hands."

His mother drew a chair beside her and settled him comfortably.

"I'm awfully hungry," he began. "I couldn't eat much supper last night. But it hurts my foot to hang down——"

"Prim, bring a foot-rest. There, isn't that nice? Now, what will you have to eat? Cap made some delicious pancakes."

"You know I'm not at all ill, and it would be worse if I had a splitting headache at the beginning of me——"

"While your foot is at the very end of you," laughed Prim.

"I think it is going to get well pretty soon. It doesn't hurt when I keep it quite still."

"We will see what the doctor says," said his mother.

"I think you'll have to wait until they perfect the flying-machines," remarked his father. "They will surely achieve them."

"But you can't put them on like wings. That is what I want."



They had a rather merry time, and afterward Tip was taken back to the library, where Laurel studied his bandaged foot and was full of wonder, wanting to hear why the wings didn't fly. "If they'd had feathers on them——," she began.

"Or if Tip had been light as a bird," interrupted Prim.

"That's just it," said Rhoda. "You ought to have known about the— isn't it equilibrium?"

"Even an eagle or a condor is smaller than Tip," Prim remarked sagely.

They dispersed to various duties, and discussed the coming of Mrs. Alden and how glad they would be to see her.

"But she can never be our grandmother now, as she used to plan," said Goldie.

Dr. Wardlaw came in and unrolled the bandage. The swelling had decreased, but it seemed as if the soreness had increased. The doctor made a very thorough examination, and, of course, poor Tip cried and felt as if the strong fingers were pulling off his foot. But no bones were displaced, and he was very much encouraged.

"But you make it hurt more and more," complained Tip. "Are you going to do that tomorrow?"

"After a few days it will not be so sore."



Tip gave a long sigh and wiped away some tears.

It was very quiet afterward. Tip read a little, then his mother brought her sewing and sat by him. Mrs. Greer came in and was quite encouraging, but Tip couldn't imagine how he was going to endure weeks of it. But Dan said he would make him a crutch and in a week or so he could walk about.

In the afternoon Mr. Evans came in, and Chan was home early, and Tip wanted them to play checkers, for he thought he would like to learn, and the children came home, and all things seemed natural again.

"It must be awfully lonesome when we are all away," Tip said to his mother.

"Yes, only I keep so busy—with eight children to look after."

"What a lot of stockings there are to darn! And Prim doesn't knit any more. But that little Greta does. Isn't she a smart girl?"

"She is very industrious. You all have a great many pleasures and are driving out every day."

"I suppose I can go out with the pony if I haven't but one good leg."

"Some one must go with you in case of an accident."

Then she went out to the kitchen to help Cap a



little, and Amaryllis put the spare chamber in order and gathered some flowers.

Mr. Mann came home early with his guests. They were on the porch to welcome them. Mr. Benson was a fine-looking farmer, you could tell that at a glance, with a cordial, hearty air, but Mrs. Alden had changed very much, Rilla thought. Or had the girl idealized her? Why, her mother was quite as much of a lady!

Rilla conducted them to their room.

"Oh, how you have all grown and changed, but your mother doesn't look a day older! And how lovely and homelike everything is! Why, Rilla, you are almost a young lady; quite as tall as our mother, I think. And it is so delightful to see you all once more."

"I wish we had about half the children," said Mr. Benson. "We have only one little grandson, though I've four out in Wisconsin, but then I've never seen the two younger ones. I'm very fond of children, and you have such a variety," he added with a smile.

"Yes," returned Rilla. "Even our twins are not at all alike."

"Well, this is a treat," declared Mr. Benson when they had entered the dinning-room and were seated at the table, looking up and down at the



happy faces. And they all seemed so good-natured and polite that it was a sight to study them, and a pleasure to hear such appreciative memories of his wife. She certainly had been very good to give up this pleasant home and care for her ailing daughter-in-law and then her son.

Then the two men went out for a stroll, while the others took the porch and talked over their earlier acquaintance, and the Ross family.

They have a snug little house of seven rooms and all the conveniences, and a very nice garden. Mrs. Ross is an enthusiastic gardener. They have a fine school near by, and the eldest girl has set her heart on being a teacher.

"We have not seen them in over a year, but they seem prosperous and content."

"They are all that, thanks in a great degree to Mr. Mann. And *how* the business has prospered. Oh, Mrs. Mann, you certainly have a very happy life. And that your little boy should be a success! I'm sorry I am so far away. I should like to come often. Really I had quite a struggle to decide whether I should stay—I longed so for you all. But my son was quite urgent, and Mr. Benson was a very nice, reliable man. And it is good to have a home for your declining years. The farm had a hundred acres some ten years ago, but he



decided to sell half of it. The purchaser built a nice house near us, and we have a delightful neighbor opposite. Then my son's new wife has some relatives near us and they come out quite often. She seems a stirring, thrifty girl, and is very fond of him. I hope there will be a family of children. We shall always keep the little boy. There is a sort of cousin Mr. Benson took in a few years ago, an excellent housekeeper, so I am not so closely confined. Altogether, it seems a very sensible step, for he has a most kindly heart."

"I am sure it has been a wise step, and I hope, as the years go on, you will find the home and companionship a great blessing," said Mrs. Mann. "But we could have gone on very nicely together. I hardly know how I can get along when Cap leaves me, though there is no immediate prospect," with a soft laugh.

"Cap has toned down wonderfully. Oh, I have often recalled the picture she made as she set her bag down on the floor and announced that she was Cappadocia Terry!"

"She has proved a good, faithful girl, and has a great fund of common sense. She ought to get a more enterprising man than Abe Mulford."

Then they talked over some of the Grafton people! The old Consadine men were still alive,



though rather feeble. Two beautiful, straight streets had been laid out, and through one the trolley-line was to run up to Fairview, which was getting to be quite a thriving village. A large watch-factory had been started there.

"But so much of the property here is restricted that it will be likely to stay a residential place. Ridgewood has plenty of ground for factories."

Then they went in, and Chan played for them and they all sang. The men had finished their walk and came in, and Mr. Benson was delighted with the music.

"Why, you'd do for a church choir," he exclaimed. "We don't have anything so fine in our little church."

Tip was carried upstairs, and Laurel was sleepy, she declared. Some of the others slipped off, and presently they all dispersed.

Mr. Benson wanted to go to the city the next day to conclude some bargains about new farming machinery he had been examining. The day after, Friday, he felt that they must return, as his work needed him, though he had a trusty man. But he was so charmed with all he had seen and enjoyed that he knew he should come again, now that he had some one to share the pleasure. Why, he felt years younger since he had been married.



Mrs. Benson colored. She had thought so herself. The narrow round and his daughter's death were fast making an old man of him.

"I'm not going to school to-day," Amaryllis said. "I want to take the two ladies out and give them a nice time. And I want Mrs. Benson to see how really pretty the Little Old Red House looks."

Her mother agreed. Mrs. Benson must go out and see the pony and the swing, and hear about the pets. There were some late flowers yet in bloom. They went over to Denby. Some few houses had been improved a little, but most of them did look shabby. An exception was the little old house, that was really a nest of order and prettiness.

"I have been very fortunate in getting such a good tenant," said Mrs. Mann. "But I wonder what I could have done with all my big children if I had stayed here."

It certainly had been a fortunate exchange.

Then they went to Ridgewood, which had a busy, thriving appearance, and it was quite late when they reached home. Laurel had coaxed to bring in Amy, as she didn't want to eat dinner all alone. Cap had just settled them at one end of the table.



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"We couldn't wait," apologized Laurel, "'cause we had to go back to school."

"That was all right," returned her mother.

"And we have had a delightful time," said Mrs. Benson. "I'm sorry to go away so soon. Farmers I think are averse to visiting, but Mr. Benson regrets that we must go so soon. And I do hope some of you will find an opportunity to visit me. We have a beautiful section of the country, and an abundance of everything. And, my dear Mrs. Mann, do not let us outgrow this friendship."



## CHAPTER XVI

### A WEEK IN NEW YORK

A FEW evenings after the visit Rilla and her mother sat sewing, the elder on a frock she was making over, the girl embroidering, which was one of her latest loves. The younger children were in bed, the girls and Linn had gone to spend the evening with some friends, and Chan was at the rectory.

"Why are you so quiet?" asked the mother.

"Oh, I was thinking. Ever since Mrs. Benson was here I have been a little puzzled."

"Well—what about?"

"Do you sometimes outgrow people and yet continue to like them? Or is it something in you?"

"Both things happen. What is it in this case?"

"Don't you remember how perfect I thought Mrs. Alden? I copied her all I could. There were so many admirable things about her, that air of refinement that no one had at Denby. I think I really adored her. After she went away I felt as if something had been torn out of my life, but I kept on doing all I could remember."



"And then?" queried her mother.

"Why doesn't she look as beautiful to me now?"

"My dear child, you have grown older and have mingled with more people. A young girl's love is apt to be very intense, and Mrs. Alden was the first well-bred and refined person with nice tastes that you had come in contact with. She was sweet and winning also, and she had been with some better-class people. I had always lived a plain life, for there was so much to do. So I don't wonder you were charmed with her. I'm glad you happened to meet such a person."

"Why don't I feel the same now?"

"As I said, you are older, and you are living in an atmosphere where most of the men and women pay that nice deference to society ways. So she doesn't stand alone in your estimation now. And you will find more elegant people."

"Then you don't think it would be insincere to change my mind about some things. I should still love her for many charming qualities. But she couldn't be my ideal woman."

"We all outgrow our ideals, Rilla."

"Then you feel that it would not be—insincere!"

"You will love her for the qualities that are fine



and sweet and tender. She will always be a good friend to us. I think she is sincerely attached to us. But you will find many other people to like in the course of your pilgrimage."

"I like those who can talk about fine and noble deeds and what is best in books, what are good books to read. I like Mr. Evans for that. And I *do* like Mrs. Bradley. She knows so many interesting things. Then that Miss Golding, Mother. She has been abroad, she has seen so much that is beautiful and grand. I wonder if she would go out driving with me some time?"

"I think so. Mr. Golding has been very unfortunate in business and now is in poor health, so that he has had to give up his position. Miss Golding is a great sufferer from sciatica and cannot go out much. Yes, I think she would take it very kindly."

"And if I came to like her very much——"

"Oh, Rilla, we like a great many people in the course of our lives. We should be narrow indeed if we confined all our appreciation to one person. No one has all the virtues and graces. We like one friend for several qualities that another very lovable person may be quite deficient in. I think I understand how you feel about Mrs. Benson. She has not broadened any. It was not



to be expected in the life she has led, the sorrow and sympathy for her son, and now her chief desire is to make her husband happy and be interested in his pursuits. You are a modern schoolgirl with the knowledge of to-day before you, and there is a great difference. You must have what is best for your life, and not fashion it after the life of any other person."

"I did not use to like Mrs. Burnham very much, at least I felt a little afraid of her. But when I spent the week there in the summer I thought her quite delightful. She found so many sweet little poems for me, and wonderful journeys that were so interesting. And I went to her Wednesday-afternoon Bible class, that was just lovely. I wish we had a minister's wife like that. I suppose I should make another ideal out of her now if I saw her quite often," and Rilla smiled.

"Mrs. Burnham is in just the right place and among congenial people. She is doing excellent work, and perhaps you noticed that she did not worry so much about Katy, who is getting to be a normal child and a happy one. I am glad that parish came to them. They never could have done their best work at Denby."

"It's such a queer place," said Amaryllis with a soft little laugh.



She had not confessed to her mother that she felt disappointed in Mrs. Benson. There seemed boundaries to her on the intellectual sides. She did not respond to many of the things that had grown very dear to the girl, while she admired their surroundings and the growth and improvement in the children, especially Chan's musical advance. That he should be able to command a salary and had been abroad gratified her very much. But Rilla was moved and thrilled by the exquisite melody that seemed like a glimpse of heaven.

"Rilla," her mother said presently, "you must not get all your friends among people so much older than yourself. You must have some glad, free life."

"I like some of the girls very much," she said gravely.

Dan fashioned a nice crutch for Tip, though at first he declared it made his ankle lamer.

Linn suggested putting his leg in a sling as one did with a broken arm, but they couldn't seem to get the right adjustment. The boys were quite curious to see the wings, and Mr. Evans thought them very ingenious.

"I'm going to put a kite to them some day and see how they will go up," he said.



And so the time flew on and Christmas was coming again.

"If we could only think of something spandy new," declared Prim. "Several of the girls are going to have parties. And Addie Burgoyne is going to Washington with her aunt."

"And we haven't any aunts or cousins. It's rather funny," said Linn.

"We've had so many things. Of course, books are different every year, but I have my new winter suit. We might go to the great museum, or to see some pretty play. Oh, let us have a play of our own some time!"

"I shall hang up my stocking," announced Tip, "even if I don't believe in Santa Claus."

"Well, we can play Santa Claus around with other people."

"But there are no real poor to be surprised and made glad."

"I wonder how you older ones would like to spend a week in New York," said Mr. Mann.

"And this year in New York. And then somewhere else. Father Mann, you've hidden something in that dimple, and it just wants to laugh."

He did laugh then.

"I'm doing several sums in addition, to see how I can make them join."



"Well, if you can prove them," said Rhoda.  
"But you don't say 'join' in addition."

"Mr. Collamore and his wife and son are coming down for a fortnight, and they will ask you to a dinner."

"That will be splendid!"

"And Mr. Gwynne is to give a grand concert."

"Oh, why can't we go to New York for a week? Only there are so many of us."

"And I am to hear that grand oratorio of the 'Messiah,'" said Chan. "That will be the loveliest Christmas gift. Did Mr. Gwynne write about it?"

"He said he should reach New York on Saturday and he wanted to hear you sing on Sunday."

"Christmas will be finer," declared Chan. "Oh, we shall be so glad to see him! And he will come up. It will be just a splendid Christmas! I won't want anything else."

Then some guests came in and there could be no more talk about it.

But the next day a plan matured in Mr. Mann's mind. Why shouldn't all the older ones and Bessy go down on Monday and stay most of the week? There was an invitation for Prim and Goldie to take afternoon tea with Miss Greatorex.

Mr. Gwynne's plan came to hand. He would



go to church on Sunday. Monday he had to give a grand musical at a fine country house, then Tuesday being Christmas he wanted the older ones to come down and take dinner with him. The oratorio was to be Wednesday night. Thursday evening he was to give a concert at which he had promised that Chandler should be one of the stars. He had not meant to bring him out so soon, and he should not expect to have him sing again through the winter.

"So you see we had better go down for the week. The older children want to hear Chan sing in the church," said their father.

"But the others? We can't take them all," said Bessy, aghast.

"Oh, no. And the younger children will have time enough to see and hear."

"But I couldn't go."

"Oh, yes, you can. I'll get some place that doesn't cost a fortune—three rooms—and the children will have the time of their lives. We don't know what may happen next year. Bessy, you can have a diamond ring, or share the pleasure with the children."

He looked at her and laughed.

"Oh!" she said. "Oh! I don't care so much for the diamond, but—so many of us——"



"Well, we'll have a Merry Christmas."

"But the others will be so disappointed."

"We will plan something for them."

School had closed on Friday noon, winding up with a splendid game of hockey in which Stuart and Linn distinguished themselves. On Saturday, the younger children went over to Ridgewood to buy Christmas gifts, and were to go to a restaurant for dinner. Cap was to keep them in order, while Rhoda was to be the head of the group and disburse the money. Then they were to go to a moving-picture show.

Meanwhile the others were to be ready to go with the seven o'clock train. Cap's sister, who had been down on two brief visits, was to come and stay over Sunday. Dan went up for her.

The children reached home shortly after five. There was a great outcry, to be sure.

"But you'll come home right away after Christmas," declared Tip. "And you haven't seen our things, and, oh, the play was so funny! It's just awful to have you go off this way! And I'm so tired! And my ankle hurts."

Tip began to cry. Bessy wanted to turn back, but the five children had gone on before. That was their father's plan.

"Oh, we were so afraid you wouldn't come!"



and Prim hugged her mother as if she would never let her go. Then the train came along.

"I wonder how you got away," began Linn. "I was afraid——"

"I think I am out of my mind," and Bessy Mann wiped her eyes.

"Do you suppose they will go out on the porch and cry?" asked Mr. Mann.

"It was really cruel."

"Mother dear, they will have lots of good times," said Linn.

The hotel was a plain little place on a side street, but warm and light. They had one large room and two small ones, while Linn was to go up on the next floor. They did not feel very hungry for their second dinner and were glad to go to bed, but Bessy's thoughts were back with the smaller children. Of course, Cap would take good care of them. But her mother heart was torn with their disappointment and the way she had slipped off with so little explanation.

They were in a quiet, rather old-fashioned street where there was very little passing. But they made quite a show when they started for church. Mr. Gwynne had given them a card to one of the ushers, and they filled the pew.

Oh, how beautiful it was with its greenery and



flowers! There was nothing like it in Grafton. And the service was very impressive with the fine singing. But when it came to Chan's anthem they hardly dared breathe. Used as they were to his voice, they hardly knew it here.

Miss Griswold came to meet them. They were to have luncheon a little after one, and Mr. Gwynne would meet them all at her house. Her mother had everything arranged.

There was really no chance to demur. They took a little walk, passing some very handsome apartment houses that looked like hotels. And there was Mr. Gwynne awaiting them.

"We really filled up the room and looked like a party," Primrose said afterward. "And Mrs. Griswold is very sweet and lovely. What hosts of delightful people you meet outside of Denby! And they must have had a forlorn Christmas. I couldn't help feeling sorry for Mr. Evans at home. Oh, do you remember the first time you sang that Easter anthem, Chan?"

"I'd like to go up again and sing for him, if I could be in two places at once."

"I can't agree to your dividing your voice," said Mr. Gwynne.

Then they talked about the concert for Monday. Chan would study two songs and an encore, and



in the evening Mr. Gwynne would go over them.

"I think you won't have any stage fright," he said. "It won't be quite as exhilarating as at Schoenwerth, but you will hear my two cornets again, and a lovely old white-haired man who plays the 'cello to perfection. But I could hardly refuse you, Chan, though I don't mean to make common property of you so soon."

Chan glanced up with a sweet smile. Mr. Gwynne and his father were always right. Whatever pleased or satisfied them was his duty.

Mrs. Gaylord was much pleased with the girls, but Bessy was really a marvel to her, and certainly the children had a most delightful father. But her little boy was the flower of them all.

"I wish Linn wanted to go home and see how it fares with the children," Mrs. Mann said the next morning.

"But I don't, Mother," and he laughed. "Cap is a host in herself, and they'll have a first-class time, Rhoda being boss, Tip next in command, and Cap will take Laurel's part every time, but I dare say she will spend most of the time with Amy. The question is what we are to do."

"Wouldn't some of you like to go to the Children's Hospital? And you might help me



choose some Christmas present for the little patients. I always send in a little."

"And I've never been," declared Linn.

Mrs. Mann thought she would go down and call on Mrs. Gaylord again, and meet them later on.

So the others started off in high glee. Oh, how brilliant the stores were!

"Everything ingenuity can devise," said Primrose. "Oh, I have an idea. Let us have a menagerie some day. We'll have some queer animals such as the world hasn't heard of yet. We couldn't make the audience guess, and that would be a pity."

"Work it out, Prim, and I'll help. What a big place New York is! I'm glad we don't live in it. We'd get to be a row of big exclamation points."

"They were quite laden with budgets by the time they arrived at the hospital. Mrs. Mann was in the reception-room talking to Nurse Jane and the matron. And the children were warmly welcomed. They went through part of the wards, and Linn found the place where Chan had lain and sung to little Arthur.

"It's queer," he began in a voice that had an odd, unsteady note in it, "how you want people back where there is something nice going on. I recall at such times how Chan planned for the



visit. We didn't think then much about folks being rich or poor."

The children were merry enough, displaying their gifts. Some more were to come by evening. They had a very entertaining time, and when they returned to the hotel whom should they find but Miss Greatorrex?

"I should have stayed until dinner-time," she said. "Mrs. Bradley sent the address. And I'm not going to be put off. We must settle upon a day. Mrs. Bradley and the boys are coming down. I'm glad I can have all you girls, and I do want to have Chandler."

"We are going to a Christmas dinner with Mr. Gwynne. Any of the other days——"

"But there's Mr. Collamore."

"I'm in the field first," announced Miss Greatorrex. "Suppose we say Wednesday, then? From two until five, longer if you can stay."

"Chan's going to the oratorio. And there's the concert——"

"I'm booked for that. The boys are going to stay down. So you will have to count them in."

"Oh, that's jolly!" exclaimed Linn. "This Christmas will beat everything. Only I'm afraid we can't get in everything. Couldn't the days be stretched a little!"



"I think the evenings will be. Oh, Mrs. Mann, what did you do with the others? You haven't them all. And how is Tip's ankle?"

"Cap's looking after them. I didn't think it was just the thing to leave them. The ankle is rather weak yet and has to be bandaged, but it will get thoroughly well. We are very much obliged to you, Miss Greateorex, for taking us all in."

"Mr. Mann, too. Don't forget him."

The wife nodded. The children were eager in their delight.

Mr. Mann had gone to the factory to finish up his Christmas giving. He came home with a handful of letters. Dan and Cappadocia had both written. Everything was going on well. Phene was having a great time, and lots of fun with the children. Rhoda's letter was almost like a dictionary, it changed the subject so often. They were so lonesome Saturday night that if it hadn't been for Cap's sister they would all have cried. She told them such funny stories about her brothers. "I think they must be awful dumb," annotated the child. "Even church was lonesome. Can't you come back by Thursday? I don't think we can ever let you go away again until we are all grown up and married."



That made the other children laugh.

There was a note from Mr. Collamore. He and Mrs. Collamore and his son would give themselves the pleasure of calling upon them early Wednesday morning to make arrangements about their dinner.

They were all too tired to take in any more pleasure and ready to go to bed, but the little mother had to write a letter to Rhoda that would take in all of them.

There was the lovely Christmas service, but Amaryllis kept thinking of the little church at home and Mr. Evans.

"Oh," exclaimed Linn. "I wish we could have a pretty church at home, and a boy choir and crowds of people. And we'd want Chan."

"But I'll sing for you all next summer. After all, I like the little church."

Mr. Gwynne gave the dinner in his own rooms. He thought they would all feel more at home and could talk over matters familiarly. It was really delightful, and a feast, though Prim said afterward that the turkeys at home tasted just as good, only there were some delicious fruits that seemed as if they had just come off of the trees.

Mr. Gwynne played for them afterward, and Chan sang his concert pieces. The 'Lullaby' moved



Rilla to tears, and Prim besought Mr. Gwynne to tell the story of the out-of-doors festival and the lovely old Countess over again. They were certainly very happy, even to Mrs. Mann, when she looked at their joyous faces.

Mr. Mann declared that he was getting very dissipated. He did not think he had ever been to a real afternoon tea, and in a lady's studio. Miss Greatorrex had made it very pretty with greens and flowers, and there were two delightful young ladies who poured tea and coffee, and two more who waited on the guests. And it was almost a party; so many people came in, and some of them were so elegantly dressed, that Amaryllis felt they were almost out of place.

"If I could only think of bright things to say, like Prim," she thought regretfully.

Prim was in her element. Miss Greatorrex was certainly bringing her out. And after some persuasion Chan sang, as he had to make no effort in the evening, and he was most cordially applauded.

"Children," began Miss Greatorrex, as they went to the anteroom to don their wraps, "I must thank you most sincerely for the pleasure you have given me and my friends, several of whom were most anxious to meet you. I was almost afraid you couldn't be such real children outside of Grafton."



"And I was afraid——" began Mrs. Mann, deprecatingly.

"They were just right. I think I shall run away with Primrose some time and take her to Germany."

"But you must promise solemnly to bring her back. We can't spare one of them," said Mr. Mann.



## CHAPTER XVII

### IN THE GLADNESS OF YOUTH

AMARYLLIS and Chan were the only ones who went to the oratorio. Linn had been wild to see "Julius Cæsar," that had been splendidly staged in the city, with some of the star actors, and so Mr. Mann had promised to take him.

"You girls wouldn't care anything about it," Linn said with the dignity of a very big boy.

So they contented themselves with talking of the beautiful gowns, and the pretty teacups, and the pictures in the studio, and wondered if they ever would go abroad.

"There must be no end of rich people in New York," said Primrose with a sigh.

"Well, we had a good time, if we weren't dressed up in the finest," returned Marigold. "And when I'm having a good time I scarcely think of my clothes."

But the hall was already crowded. They had seats in the first tier of the balcony, where the children could have unobstructed sight. The



orchestra was one of the finest, and the leader stood at the head of his profession.

Mr. Gwynne was watching the boy closely. Chan was bewildered by the wonderful harmony of the instrumental part. But the recitative and the arias bound him with a magnetic spell, and his face was so rapt, so transfigured, that more than one turned to look. He seemed borne along on some raptured current. Mr. Gwynne clasped his hand, but even that did not recall him from that enchanted atmosphere. And when the music paused, he covered his face with his hands, as if he still drank in the sound of the wonderful melody.

But if all that had gone before was soul-moving, the "Hallelujah Chorus" seemed indeed a sound of the echoes of heaven. The applause was deafening.

Chan rose and threw himself in his friend's arms. "Oh, let us go!" he cried. "I cannot stand it."

They were quite near one exit. Mr. Gwynne had an arm around each child, and they presently reached the street.

"I can't talk any now," the boy said in a broken voice. "Some other time, Rilla, you tell him."

Rilla had been full of musical rapture, but it had not penetrated every nerve as with Chan. Mr. Gwynne understood and talked to her. They took



the car, and Chan clung to his dear friend, as there was no seat. A short walk brought them home.

"I feel as if I had been in heaven, but I should not want to come back if that were so."

"It is not time for you to go to heaven yet, my dear boy. There is a good deal of work for you to do, and I think a great deal of pleasure for you to give."

Mrs. Mann looked frightened at a certain unearthliness about him.

"Put him to bed at once and let Amaryllis do the talking. He has been listening too intently. Good-night, Chan dear. Sleep till noon to-morrow."

"Oh, Mother," exclaimed Amaryllis, "one can't describe it! It is transporting. I'm glad Mr. Evans has heard it, for we can talk it over."

"You must both go to bed at once. It is very late."

Chan did sleep until noon. Mr. Gwynne had just called for the second time, with something of a fear in his heart.

"I woke up singing that cradle song to the Countess. Why, I saw her so plainly—wasn't it odd?"

"I'm glad you haven't forgotten it. And are you rested? It's cruel to make you sing to-night."



"Oh, that's all right. I'm rested now. And I believe I'm hungry. I feel as if I had not eaten anything for a month."

Mr. Gwynne ordered his meal. Linn was all enthusiasm about "Julius Cæsar," and said he would like to see it again that night.

The far-off look had not all gone out of Chan's eyes, but he went over to Miss Gaylord's and practiced his songs. She would go with him as a chaperon. Mr. Gwynne had made arrangements for them all. The Collamores were to be there. Linn was tremendously interested.

After they were seated in the hall he whispered to his mother, "It's queer, but I should think Chan would be frightened to face all this audience."

A very good audience it was. Mr. Gwynne was an excellent conductor, and his selections were among the choice favorites. There was quite a noted singer, and the cornet-players always drew a good house.

It seemed as if Chan looked very small, standing there on the stage. But Mr. Gwynne's smile gave him courage. The piano began. And then it seemed as if the voice had gained richness and strength. After the first half-dozen notes Mr. Gwynne had no fear. Of course, Chan's church



singing had preceded him, and many outside were anxious to hear the voice that had aroused such an interest.

It was the last number of the first part, and surely there was applause enough to satisfy the most exigent. Miss Gaylord was waiting for him.

"Go on again and make your best bow," she said, which he did with a smile.

Mr. Collamore came over to the party.

"That was fine," he said. "That child's voice has a wonderful compass. I was afraid he could not fill the hall. Mr. Gwynne was wise to save him twice for the last. Have you all had a good Christmas time?"

"It's been just crowded full," said Linn. "And I've seen that splendid 'Julius Cæsar.'"

"It is a wonderfully fine cast. I never saw a better. You haven't forgotten that you owe me to-morrow evening. Harry is anxious to meet you all."

"Oh, no. The week ought to be as long again."

"I think you would all be worn out," said their mother.

The band stopped their tuning and people began to be seated. The cornets led off, and the number was the "Birds," which was rapturously received. When it came Chan's turn he sang the cradle song



in German, to which the audience listened attentively. Then the violoncello solo won much praise for the old player. Chan's second number had the echo in it that seemed to go farther and farther off. There was only one number more, a piano fantasia. A gentleman passed a note up to the conductor. It asked if he would be kind enough to have the beautiful young lad sing the German song again and gratify a number of Germans in the audience.

Mr. Gwynne bowed affirmatively to the man, who was plainly a German, much pleased at the request, as he chose it for the exquisite melody. Then he announced the request to the audience and it was received with applause.

Afterward Chan had quite an ovation. One of the gentlemen had heard him spoken of by a friend who had crossed over on the same steamer—a Mr. Bernstein.

"Oh, yes, I remember him very well," returned Chandler. "I had a lovely time in Germany."

"And you sing your way right into any one's heart. I shall come to the church to hear you."

"Oh, I am glad to give you pleasure," and the smile was like a bit of sunshine.

"I am glad the week is coming to an end," said Mr. Gwynne. "Now you will go home on Mon-



day, and you must take a solid week's vacation and go to bed early. Nothing must tempt you to sing in public again this winter. I'm sorry I can't take you to Russia with me, though I should be afraid of the cold. You must go on with the German and the Italian. Now go to bed as soon as you are in the house. I'll see you again before you go out to-morrow. Good-night, my little lad. I am very fond of you."

"I am really glad there is but one thing more," said Mrs. Mann. "I hope that Mrs. Collamore isn't——"

"Oh, you may be sure she *is*, Momsey. Any one who goes abroad every year and has diamond necklaces and stops at big hotels—why we ought to have something fine. Chan, what is Mr. Harry like?"

"He's handsome, not as dark as his father, and he looks as if he might be jolly. He said his father had fallen in love with all of us, and that he hoped to see us."

"And he's a Harvard blood," put in Linn. "I shouldn't go to Harvard. I think Cornell will do for me—if I go anywhere."

"But you surely will. Father wants you to," said Amaryllis earnestly.

"Yes, I hope to, if I get in the high school in



June. Oh, I'll study day and night but that I'll get there."

Mr. Collamore came for them in his auto. Mr. Mann had telephoned to his host that on account of some important business he would not be able to meet the company until six.

"And so I thought I'd treat you to a ride. It is not very cold and the sun shines like a June day. It has been a fine week."

"And we've had a fine time all through," returned Linn. "Sometimes you seem to live so much in a little while. It's queer, isn't it! But the finest thing, to my fancy, was 'Julius Cæsar.'"

"It was a splendid cast. We may never see all those first-class actors in it again," said Mr. Collamore.

It was a delightful ride over a part of the city they had not seen before, and then they paused at one of the grand hotels, where the elevator took them up another journey.

Harry stood there to receive them, and caught Chan's hand. Mr. Collamore escorted Mrs. Mann to the elegant parlor, where his wife gave them a cordial, if somewhat stately, welcome. Primrose fairly stared at her splendid dress and her diamonds. Harry took possession of the younger group and led them down the long room. Amaryl-



lis kept beside her mother lest she might feel a little timid amid so much grandeur.

The piano was at the farther end of the room. "I want to hear those German things over," began Harry. "You little fellow—how you stood there and sang and never looked a bit afraid. I don't see how you could do it."

"But if you could have seen all those people at Schoenwerth! I did feel a little afraid there at first, but they were all so cordial and kindly."

"It seemed odd that such a little mite as you could make people fairly hold their breath. Won't you sing for me now? Oh, if Arthur could be here! Isn't it strange that my little dying brother should have started us in friendship!"

Chan gave the hand a squeeze as Harry led him to the piano.

"But won't it interrupt the others?"

"Oh, no. Mother isn't very musical, if she does go to grand operas. I don't like them much, except that 'Lohengrin.' That's fine. Now, Chan."

Mr. Collamore walked over to the group. Mrs. Collamore was congratulating her guest on her promising son, and that he was quite a traveler for one so young.

"Of course, you'll go abroad," she said to



Amaryllis. "It is the finish to a young lady's education."

"I don't know," said the girl hesitatingly.

"There are so many girls in our household," added Mrs. Mann.

"But two might go together with the governess. I shall send my girls to school somewhere in the Parisian suburbs with a nurse as soon as Muriel is six. Isabel is two years older. I want them to have the true Parisian accent. And our American girls are apt to marry into prominent families abroad. One of my cousins married a Russian count connected with the government, and she lives at St. Petersburg in the winter. And another cousin married one of the queen's guard—we thought she almost threw herself away, as he was a third son. Then the second one was killed in an accident, and the heir was stricken with a dangerous fever. So now she is Lady Winterlea, and will be a duchess when the old people lay down their title. I'd like both of my daughters to marry abroad. They will be quite pretty girls. And if the husband has a good position I think they are paid more respect."

Amaryllis was thinking of the two little girls at school among strangers where they did not even hear their own language. What would Laurel do



in such a case? And as Mrs. Collamore talked on she was glad Papa Mann was not rich and always traveling abroad.

Then they were summoned to dinner. They had a private dining-room which was very elegant, but Primrose thought she would like to be in the grand dining-room and see all the people. Two servants waited upon them and Mr. Collamore was a very gracious host.

Afterward the talk was general, and the host seemed to gather them all in. Harry made himself very attractive and Mr. Mann admired him very much. Mr. Collamore seemed especially interested in Linn, and his wife induced Chan to talk of the birthday *fête* of the Countess. He was very simply sweet and modest. Altogether they had a pleasant evening. Then they were to part for ever so long. The Collamores would be abroad, Harry at Harvard, and the host of children in their own every-day home.

"I believe we are all glad to start back," said Primrose, "and yet it has been splendid. But it makes one feel as if there had been too much cake and you wanted a slice of Cap's good bread and butter. Everybody has been nice, but oh, Momsey, I'm glad you are not like Mrs. Collamore! It would not do for her to visit us—we should hor-



rify her. I don't believe she could take any one *to* her heart unless she saw some streak of grandeur. And to think how long she will be away from her little girls! But I *do* like Harry. He has lots of fun in him."

Amaryllis sighed over the little girls as well. But oh, how glad they were to be at home, though it had such a plain aspect. And the others could hardly contain themselves. Tip could walk pretty well without his crutch, though he was a little afraid. Rhoda wanted to hear everything at once. Laurel crept up in her father's arms and said:

"I'm so glad you and Momsey didn't want to go to London, even if the queen is there. Momsey's the queen for us."

But Amaryllis said on Sunday: "Oh, if we could have a nice, lovely church and Chan singing in it! How happy it would make Mr. Evans."

It took them all day Monday to hear Cap's experience, with notes and corrections from Lal and Rhoda. Phene was a darling, only she didn't have red cheeks and nice fat arms, like Cap.

"She had the time of her life," said Cap, "and all the mince pie and chicken she wanted. Then Pop had to come over on Thursday to get her, 'cause Mother misses her so, and her rheumatiz was bad again. He didn't see why his gals



couldn't stay home and help along 'stead of startin' off to help other people!

"Then I spunked up," continued Cap, and said: 'If you'd play like other people, and let us have some good times, and not be always grumbling, we'd feel more like it, and you've always lotted so much on boys, why don't you get some work out of them? You'll work Phene into her grave some day.' I'd sent her out riding with the children, and they didn't get back till dark. Then I wouldn't let Phene go until she'd had supper, and he was glad enough to stay. My, how he did eat! He don't get such things every day—he's too stingy to provide 'em. And he went away kind o' grouty 'cause it was so late. Phene kissed the young ones and cried a little, and said if she was ever sick she'd come straight over here."

"I wish you could have kept her," and Rilla winked away some tears.

New Year's morning there was a pretty little box on Mother's plate. She opened it very slowly, for they were all looking so eagerly. Then she shut it up again with a warm flush on her face.

Mr. Mann came around, opened it and put a ring on her finger.

"Your mother thought it would be more enjoyment to have you older ones spend a week in



the city than to have a diamond. But I had bought the ring," and the dimple in his cheek was all of a quiver.

"Oh, Mother dear." It seemed as if they left the table like a swarm of bees and clustered about her, and there were as many arms encircling her as those of Briareus.

"Children, save a little of her," Mr. Mann entreated.

"It's the loveliest ending to Christmas," said Chan. "And it has been such a delightful year!"

"And now we are beginning a new one," rejoined their father, "and we must try to make it better—if there is any such thing—and happier still."

"I don't believe we can," declared Primrose. "I've been full up to the brim, and I think we have known some of the most charming people and had the greatest surprises and—and the most fun and good times. And you are the dearest Father!"



## CHAPTER XVIII

### GATHERING UP THE THREADS

MR. EVANS must hear about everything. He had been very busy, as there had been several sick people, but he had stolen away for Chan's concert, as they called it. They were all back in school, deep in study and play and children's gatherings, and snowballing and coasting downhill, with all the eagerness of youth.

Dr. Wardlaw came in one morning. Tip had been pronounced sound in limb some time before, but his mother started and turned pale.

"Grafton has lost one of its foundation stones," he explained. "Mr. Peter Consadine was found dead in his bed this morning. He had been failing all winter, however. It was a great shock to Mr. Ira, who just looked at his brother and went back to bed again. I don't believe he will last long. Queer how much those old men have been to each other. You don't always see such attachment among old people.

"Well, they have really been an example, the



counterpart of each other. They might almost have been twins."

"And my twins are not a bit alike," Mrs. Mann returned with a smile.

"I wonder where all the money will go? They are the last of their family. It is said they started the burying-ground when this end was all woods and wilds. Mr. Evans went over."

It startled Grafton, and every one seemed full of pity for Mr. Ira. There was a very trustworthy housekeeper with a reliable old husband. Mr. Woodford, their lawyer, came over from Ridgewood, but Mr. Ira put all matters concerning the burial into Mr. Evans' hands.

"Mr. Woodford has both our wills. They are just alike. Mr. Bradley is executor with him. I can't be disturbed about anything," declared Ira. "I feel as if I should soon join my dear brother, and I want to be at peace."

He was not even up at the funeral, which they thought had better be at the church. It was very largely attended.

"Dr. Wardlaw thinks Ira is failing rapidly, so we will do nothing about the settlement until he is gone," said Mr. Woodford.

A fortnight later they laid Ira beside his brother. Due notice was given for all who had claims to



present them. During the latter part of the summer the brothers had sold a large plot and given the grounds for a street through it, to be devoted to strictly residential purposes. The old stone house of two stories with a high peaked roof, with all the curios of several generations of Consadines, was to be turned into a museum. A board of trustees was appointed, and as the remaining property was sold it was to be added to a trust fund for its support. There was a legacy to the housekeeper and her husband, who were to have charge until incapacitated; a plot added to the cemetery, and five thousand dollars toward building a new church beside the chapel when it should be needed.

"That really was very kind of them," said Mr. Evans. "Grafton will be one of the finest suburbs. I am thankful the property is restricted."

The brothers had interested themselves in arranging two rooms as they wished them kept. There were old Revolutionary relics. One Consadine had been in the China trade and gathered many really beautiful articles. Another had spent years in Central America and sent home his treasures. Then from time to time they had bought relics with a curious history.

One family of Consadines came to light with



some claims, but the family record had been kept with such exactitude that they were disproved. The board of trustees was composed of the residents. Mr. Brenner, Mr. Greer, Mr. Chedister, and among the later ones Mr. Mann had been added.

"But it was good in them to think of the church," said Linn. "Mr. Evans used to talk of it, and thought some day he would start a subscription. And now it is started in first-class order."

The syndicate started their new houses. They were to have a frontage of one hundred feet with lawn in front. Two had been spoken for. Ridgewood people began to consider it the thing to get away from the smoke and dust and noise of the factories. The trolley-line was extended to the next town, and the primary school begun. Some of the families with no children protested.

"It's the very thing that has kept out a raft of children. And it will bring in the Fairfield young ones. The place will be spoiled for refined people."

"Well, the Firth children haven't spoiled it, and there are eight of them, and think of that little Chandler singing in a big New York church!"

"Well, there *are* some exceptions."

Toward spring they had a scare about Cap.



Abe Mulford *had* managed to save a little money by working steadily. And a man from Northeast had found a cheap farm with an old house and was importuning Abe to join him. And if Abe would marry they'd have a good housekeeper. The Terry girls got along first-class.

"Pine Brook!" said Dan Wilson with a fling in his voice. "It's worse than Denby. That *is* a sort of town, the other is run-down farms and forty miles from nowhere! You couldn't get things to market, and most people manage to raise enough to eat and nudge along. I wouldn't take a farm there as a gift. It would be dear at that."

Abe *did* nag. He'd never have such a chance again, he was afraid. And he really was tired of the Creamery. Milking cows wasn't a very entertaining business, and one didn't get along, he said.

"But you've saved up money since you've been there," said Cap. "And you'd need money to start farming. It doesn't grow in the ground."

Dan took Cappadocia over one day. It was a long ride. There was a remnant of a pine forest, and a meandering stream. The houses were far apart and very much out of repair, the fields looked anything but promising. This had a row of worn-out cherry-trees along the road. The cottage was



a story and a half, with the paint mostly worn off. There were four rooms on the first floor and three upstairs. Plaster had fallen off on account of the leaky roof, there were no conveniences, and it looked most discouraging.

"If any one thinks I'm going to a place like that, they're quite mistook," declared Cap with energy. "I'm not in such a hurry to be married. I'm well off where I be, an' I know it. Why, the other girls would just laugh at me! It's cheap, to be sure, but it would cost a sight to get it in order. I just sha'n't choose hard work instead of easy."

"You stay where you are," advised Dan.

It led to quite a quarrel between the lovers, and Abe stopped coming in to supper. Then, being rather neglectful, he was discharged, and had, as Cap said, "to begin over again."

"I'm so glad, Mother," began Amaryllis. "We've grown used to Cap, and she has improved so much."

"I don't know where we'd find any one like her," said the mother.

And the children were growing so large that they almost frightened the little mother. Linn suddenly shot up, Rilla overtopped her mother by an inch, and the two younger girls were nearly of a size. They all did well at the spring examination, even











Tip, who did know a good deal, but couldn't always bring it to the fore. He had not given up flying altogether.

It seemed to Amaryllis that she had to put in a little of everybody's work. She had come to love music very much. She and Chan played duets, and she was studying German with him. There was fine poetry in the German language. Then Linn *would* hammer some Latin into her brain.

"Because it will be such a help the first year you are in the high school," he insisted.

Then Rhoda came to her for so many things, and was very urgent. Rhoda had discarded curls. She came home one day with her hair combed straight back and pinned with a baretté a girl had lent her, the ends flying in a tail.

"Well, you do look like a fright!" declared Prim. "And you'll sure be an old maid."

"I don't care!" half angrily. "Teacher said I had an intellectual forehead. Curls are so babyish."

"Goldie doesn't think so."

"But they're red. I should want to dye them."

"Titian, the great painter, had a daughter whose hair was red. And it immortalized her."

"Well——" Rhoda thought she'd look in the dictionary and see what the word meant.



She looked very plain with her hair brushed straight back.

Then Easter came, and Amaryllis went down to the Gaylords to hear Chan sing a fine new anthem. Mr. and Mrs. Collamore had come home and were in church, and seemed very glad to meet her. She certainly was a sweet, ladylike girl.

"Mother," she said while they were all hurrying for examination, "would you care if I didn't go in the high school?"

"I think Father would be disappointed. He counts a great deal on education."

The girl's eager countenance fell a little.

"Oh, Mother, it almost frightens me to think how old I'm getting! Why, I'd be nearly twenty-one when I graduated. I think I couldn't be a teacher; there are studies that seem very difficult to me. Goldie's smart, and though we laugh at Rhoda she gets along wonderfully. I'd rather be a home girl. And there's so many things to do for the others, and a good deal of outside work that I like so much. And if Cap should go away you'd need me very much, even if we found another capable girl. One could do a great deal in four years. A number of the girls do not expect to enter. But I'll try to pass all the examinations."



Chan made rapid progress in language, and took up two or three studies with Rilla. And then his term of singing ended. He had grown a good deal, but his health was excellent.

Mr. Kingston gave a concert with the choir boys, and Chan was very ready to oblige him. It was well attended and a great success. The Gaylords were very loth to give him up, but they would come up for a visit in the summer.

"We'll have some splendid times, Rilla," the boy said. "I'm so glad you love poetry and all such things, and that sweet, low kind of music. And we'll drive about the country ways. And I like your Miss Golding. Some time, Rilla, we'll go to Germany. You understand things so quickly that I love."

She was very glad to hear that.

They were keyed up to the highest pitch for examination. Goldie and Rhoda did finely. Prim squeezed through and Rilla did very well. But the boy flew home with a shout.

"Hurrah! hurray! I've won the day! Stood one hundred all the way through—the next one ninety-seven. And I'm on the ball-team for the match! It's just grand!"

Amy and Laurel were through at Miss Raynor's. The primary school would open in September.



"I want it all real nice," began Rhoda decisively.

"You shall have it nice," said her mother. "Now you must make out a list. I think I'd have about twenty."

Rhoda found this rather troublesome. She had kept up with some of her old schoolmates, for she met them on Sunday, and there were the Ridge-wood girls.

"Why, I can't get them all in," she began disconsolately. "Couldn't I have over twenty!"

"Some will not be able to come. Oh, we'll not abide strictly by that number."

There were summer frocks to alter, some to give away. Goldie had begun with music, and Rilla devoted two hours every day to Chan and music. And there were drives and calls and visitors. How life was widening out! And the porch and the hammocks seemed to be a general rendezvous. One night a week the boys had it and talked school and ball-games and athletics.

Mr. Evans came to talk over church matters with Chan and Amaryllis. They had music and German, and they held some quite fluent talks. Chan began to like Latin on account of the grand old hymns.

One evening they were over to see the Brenners.



One and another strayed off, until finally Mr. Mann and Mr. Evans were left alone.

"You have a guest from the other side of the world, I hear. Mr. Bradley thinks him quite remarkable," said Mr. Mann.

"Yes, a man of large experience, a medical missionary, now at the head of a Chinese college devoted largely to the science of medicine. For a year, as a lad, I was under his training. And then he was my sister's lover."

"Ah," said the listener.

"Mother was an invalid. It was quite a romance. Elizabeth cared a good deal for him, but she would not leave Mother. She had a charming friend and she kept bringing these two together. And the end of it was that she really made a match between them and they went to China, though the three remained the warmest friends. He has two boys at school in England. Two years ago Mr. Trescott's wife died. He has since corresponded with Elizabeth, just as his wife did. Our mother died, and my sister devoted her life to me. Dr. Trescott has a two-years' leave of absence. He will go back a year hence and take Elizabeth with him."

"Ah, that is quite a romance," said Mr. Mann.

"And a very happy ending. I am glad for my



sister to have some happiness of her very own. And now with the work I think I can do here, and the prospect gives me very thorough satisfaction, I feel as if I was settled for years to come. So I have dared to indulge in a little dream that I feel I ought to confess to you, that you may know my intentions are honorable."

"I shouldn't suspect you of anything dishonorable. We all like you very much."

"Thank you cordially. And never having had but one sister, your household enchants me very much. I long to become a member of it and have a right to take an interest in their different lives. I have come to love Amaryllis. I am watching her unfolding like that of a sweet, rare flower."

"That child!" in a tone that was almost indignant. "Mr. Evans, are you crazy?"

"She is hardly a child now, but on the verge of a sweet, charming womanhood. I would not hurry its blossoming, but I should like to have it to set in my home when that time comes. I wanted to say this to you, for though I have been a welcome guest in your house, as time goes on you may remark little things that will make you wonder and feel like questioning. I would much rather that you understood their import. At present I ask



nothing, only that we shall go on the same. I think Mrs. Mann will understand——”

“No, no, I cannot think of it!” broke in Mr. Mann vigorously. “I’ve counted on her. She’s so like her mother in many ways. The boys will go out in the world—Chan has found his career already. And Prim and Goldie will be attractive girls—we shall want *her* in the years to come. Not that there is any objection to you. As I said, we all like you very much, but that—no, don’t consider it. Good-night.”

Mr. Evans accepted his dismissal calmly. It would be after all as Amaryllis chose.

Mr. Mann walked through the hall with an impatient step. Cap and his wife were in eager discussion on the back porch. In spite of all remonstrances Abe had thrown up his position and joined his friend in a most unpromising venture.

“I ain’t exactly broke off, but I said plump and plain that I wouldn’t go on no such farm as that. I’ll stay here long as you want me, and I ain’t a mite afraid of being an old maid. Abe’s lost what little sense he had; mebbe he didn’t have as much as I gave him credit for. Well, I just don’t care!”

“I think you are wise, Cap. And you are young enough to wait a while.”



Mr. Mann had strolled down the driveway and paused. It was a lovely summer night. Bessy rose and joined him. He drew her arm through his.

"I've just heard something—well it is astounding! It fairly took my breath away. And from Mr. Evans!"

"Did he—was it about Rilla?"

"Oh, had he appealed to you?"

"I don't know that you could call it an appeal. It was very manly and honorable. I had half suspected him. But he is not in any hurry and, of course, she hasn't the faintest idea. He is like a big brother to them all. They will go on just the same. I think we could not give her to any one we could be more certain about. And I think she would like the life. She is a little more serious than most girls. You see, after her father died she had in a way to stand by me, to take the cares that ought not come to a child. But I could not help it. And it has made her a little older and wiser than her years. She has a sweet nature."

"But you wouldn't sacrifice her in her youth?"

"Would it be a sacrifice for a girl to go to the man she truly loved?"

"But we planned that she would stay with us when the others were gone."



"Oh, we cannot keep them in childhood always; would we if we could? And would we hold them back from the sweetest of life—a happy marriage? There will be plenty of time to think it over. And she does not want to enter high school. She will keep studying the things she likes and making her life sweet and kindly to those about her. I wish sometimes she cared for the real young things of life, yet she is charming to all the girls and never frowns on the pleasures and gayeties. They are all different. And there'll be Laurel. Rilla was very much such a child. Grandmother loved her dearly. Did you really deny Mr. Evans?"

"I—I think I did."

"If he is a true lover he will not be denied a year or two hence; that is, if it is a true regard between them."

They sat down on the porch in silence. Bessy had a thrill of pride that Amaryllis should have attracted such a man, and that he should be willing to wait until she came to the awakening. And it would be so delightful to keep her within the old home radius. Still, she felt sorry for her husband's disappointment.

Could he give her up? He fancied it was Bessy's youth over again. He loved her dearly, next to Chan. And there was little Laurel. At



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first he had counted on men and women and their going out in the world. Had so much love made him selfish? He shrank from the future. Would it bring heartaches—sacrifices?

Some one had said that the noblest of all loves was the one to give away. Elizabeth had given hers away and it would be restored fourfold. Might there not be a lesson here for him?

The fact was forced upon him that when the years of earlier childhood are gone there come changes that seem sudden and perplexing. The good stepfather was realizing this forcibly, but felt that he could trust the future. What the near future brought can be read in "The Red House Children Growing Up."

THE END



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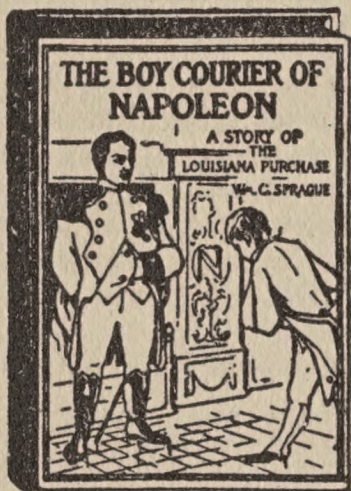
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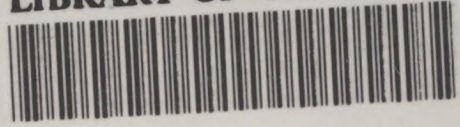








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